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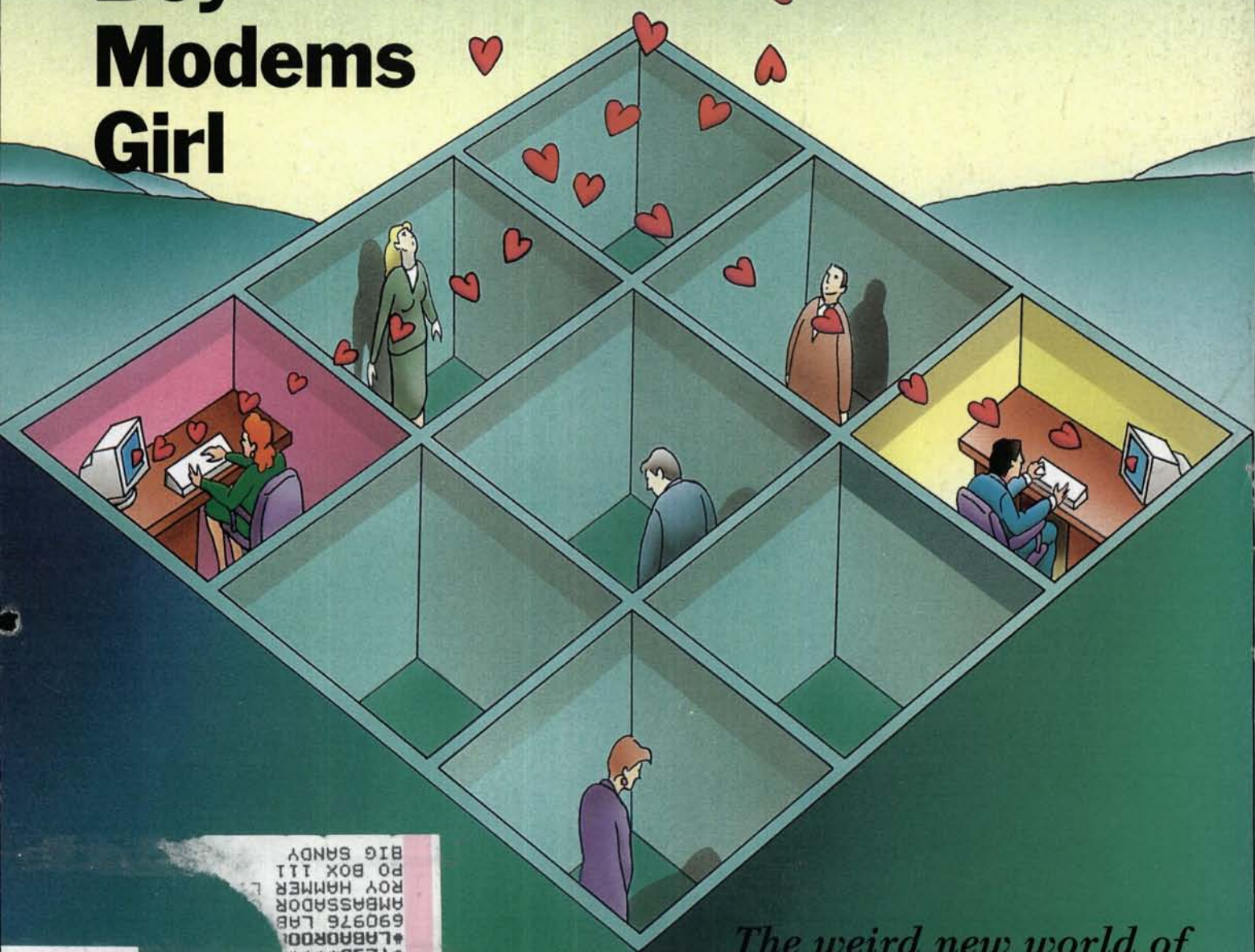

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FROM WASHINGTON

THE NICE AGE

That was a very nice inaugural address George Bush gave, as nice as nice could be. It was nice to the Democrats, nice to the Russians, nice to the homeless, nice to kids and old folks. It was just incredibly nice. The new president's new breeze blew in off the West Front of the Capitol in the form of a great howling gale of niceness.

Nice is not enough—that goes without saying—but at the moment it's all Bush has got, because Lord knows he hasn't got a mandate. In this particular as in so many others he stands in sharp contrast to the man he has succeeded. It didn't matter that Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory was due more to malfunctioning helicopters in the Iranian desert than to anything anybody said. What mattered was that Reagan had a program, and that, having swept in with him a partisan majority in the Senate and an ideological majority in the House, he had the wherewithal to push it through. Bush has neither. His party lost seats in both houses of Congress even as he was winning a comfortable personal victory. And the "issues" he campaigned on were chosen not because he or anyone else considered them important or even relevant to the nation's future but because focus group research showed that they elicited powerful emotional responses. The pertinence of patriotic rituals, penal practices, and harbor debris in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to the government of the United States is nil. Having been nasty, Bush now has no choice but to be nice.

Nice is not enough, but it represents a moral advance over what we have been hearing for the past eight years and ought to be acknowledged as such. Bush's inaugural speech contained no chest-thumping, no obsessive America-is-No.-1-ism, no lists of enemies foreign or domestic. When he praised patriotism, it was "a patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in." When he addressed himself to God—"my first act as president is a prayer," he said, borrowing the lead item from Dan Quayle's contingency plan—it was not to beg for strength to bear the awful burdens, etc., but rather to assure the man upstairs (and the nation) that George Bush understands that "we are given power not to advance our own purposes nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name," but rather "to serve people." What could be nicer?

One of the subtexts of Bush's speech was an effort to declare peace in the *Kulturkampf* of the past 20 years—a laying down of arms made weirdly explicit the next night, when Ron Wood of the Rolling Stones ceremonially presented his guitar to Lee Atwater, chairman of the Republican National Committee, after Atwater had played and sung with the likes of Percy Sledge and Joe Cocker at an inaugural rhythm-and-blues bash. If the 1970s were the decade of romantic bourgeois-baiting and the 1980s the decade of conservative revanchism, then the 1990s, if Bush has his way, will be the decade of what he called "easy-goingness about each other's attitudes and way of life." Easy-goingness is not a word one often encounters in inaugural addresses (or anywhere else), but it's a welcome thought nonetheless. Bush's rehabilitation of "activism," formerly a conservative cussword, was part of this tidying up of politico-cultural detritus. So, more clumsily, was his plea for everybody to forget about Vietnam. "This is a fact," he said. "The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory." This is not a dictum one would care to see applied to certain other great nations, such as Germany and Russia. But the underlying sentiment—for civility, against bitterness—is unexceptionable.

Bush's best paragraph—the one in which he asked, "Are we enthralled with material things, less appreciative of the nobility of work and sacrifice?" and declared that "we are not the sum of our possessions"—was an interesting mixture of political parricide and filial piety. The object of the parricide was Bush's political father, Ronald Reagan; of the piety, his real father, Senator Prescott Bush, patrician proponent of Eisenhower-era "Modern Republicanism." Prescott's voice echoed in George's call for "duty, sacrifice, commitment"; and when the son said that "leadership is passed from generation to generation" he might have been talking about his own path to power. Noblesse oblige is hardly a substitute for social policy. But it's a step up from *richesse n'oblige pas*.

As literature this inaugural address was no gem. The metaphors jostled each other like rush-hour subway riders: front porches, thick fogs, lifting mists, right paths, offered hands, invading bacteria, endless spirals. The door to the future opened into "a room called Tomorrow" and other rooms called Freedom, Prosperity, and Moral and Intellectual Satisfaction—it sounded like the convention facilities at the Hotel Cotton Mather. The big unifying metaphor, the "new breeze," scattered the leaves of the lifeless tree of totalitarianism, riffled the pages of the book of history, and wafted ever higher the beautiful kite of freedom (hang on, wasn't the breeze freedom too?).

The sole idea blowing in all this wind was the idea of "bipartisanship," which Bush presented as the political expression of niceness. Bipartisanship is normally to be mistrusted because its purpose is to shield something from the normal give and take of open democratic debate. Unipartisanship would be a more honest name for it, since it creates, within a limited sphere, a kind of one-party government. It has generally been reserved for matters of world-historical importance, such as the postwar policy of containing the Soviet Union and rebuilding Europe. Bush wants to use it to protect himself in the upcoming fight over the budget, where the chief obstacle to a solution is his own demagogic campaign pledge of no new taxes, ever. "We have more will than wallet," he told his inaugural audience, without explaining how this could be the case after 75 months of much-vaunted prosperity. In fact we have plenty of wallet. What is lacking is, precisely, will—presidential will. The Democratic leaders of Congress are likely to help Bush obfuscate this. After 12 years of outsider government they are aching to go into a room with a president who knows something about public policy, close the door behind them, and negotiate. The people get left out, and the radical dissociation between the partisan campaign and its "bipartisan" governmental sequel can only add to their already alarming alienation from and indifference to politics. That's not nice, not nice at all.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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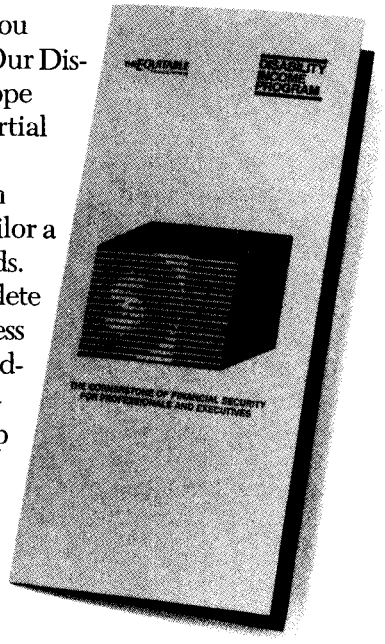

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CORRESPONDENCE

CRIMINAL POLICY

To the editors:

George Kannar argues as though the only crime issue worth talking about is the rights of the accused ("Liberals and Crime," December 19), and his article epitomizes why liberals are in Chapter 11 as far as the issue of crime is concerned. Although he refers in passing to several real issues, such as incapacitating repeat offenders versus prison overcrowding, he gives us no idea of what he would actually do about crime except, presumably, to deplore it. This omission reflects the liberal tendency to blame society more for producing the criminal than the criminal for producing the crime. Our freedom is at much greater risk from today's gunmen and drug entrepreneurs than from yesterday's misunderstandings of the exclusionary rule. Liberals are so horrified by any sort of coercion, however legit-imated by constitutional process, that they hate to admit when it is necessary. If we do not wisely employ the public monopoly of force, we leave ourselves victims to those who have no qualms whatsoever about its private use. Michael Dukakis failed to understand this. It was a big reason why he lost the election. It's a big reason why he deserved to.

HAL RIEDL
Baltimore, Maryland

THE CAPITAL OF ISRAEL

To the editors:

Contrary to what James S. Henry concludes in "Capital Exodus" (November 14), there has not been a recent mass disinvestment of Israel's private sector, certainly not on the scale he mentions. Henry argues that "a significant chunk [of Israel's external funds] ends up being invested not in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, but in places like Geneva and New York," and he claims that between 1970 and 1986 Israel had at its disposal $82 billion from external sources (through unilateral transfers and an increase in foreign liabilities). But Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics lists the growth in gross foreign liabilities between these years at $29.1 billion and transfer payments at $43.2 billion—a total of $72.3 billion. After deducting $55.3 billion for net payments for goods, services, and interest on capital and $11.5 billion for the increase in the foreign assets of the Bank of Israel and commercial banks and export credit, the residual (which Henry uses as an estimate for private capital outflows) is $5.5 billion, well short of the $11 billion he mentions. Also, this $5.5 billion includes all net errors and omissions, not just private-sector outflows. So the final figure for "capital flight" is likely to be considerably lower.

When examining the figures for 1987 (a year not included in Henry's calculations), one finds that the balance was an *inflow* of $1 billion. This seems to suggest that the economic stabilization program initiated in 1985 had begun to have a positive effect in terms of private capital flows. In 1987, with the annual inflation rate at 16 percent (a fraction of its rate prior to mid-1985), there were no expectations for a devaluation and moreover real interest rates were comparatively high. Far from "covering its ass," Israel's private sector was showing its faith in the government's economic strategy.

RAPHAEL MERON
Bank of Israel
Jerusalem, Israel

James S. Henry replies:

Part of our disagreement depends on whose estimation techniques one prefers. I relied on an independent time series for the stock of Israel's foreign debt. The central bank relies on official balance of payments statistics that are often very incomplete with respect to foreign sources of funds.

My estimates of flight capital are, if anything, too low because they ignore underinvoicing of exports by Israeli companies. In 1987 alone, exports reported by Israel to industrial countries was almost $1 billion below the imports reported by industrial countries from Israel.

My article left off with 1986 because 1987 data was not yet available. But when we decompose the 1987 "inflows" we find that the Israeli government and foreign investors were mainly responsible for them, not Israel's private investors. In fact, by the end of 1987 the private sector's outflows were running at $180 million a quarter. This disinvestment continued throughout 1988, at least until the devaluation that was taken by the government in the last week of the year. This step, taken by the central bank itself, speaks much louder than the central bank's denials about how serious a problem capital flight really is for Israel.

NO NERDS, PLEASE

To the editors:

I read with great interest Fred Barnes's article "White House Wonk" (January 2) but wish to clarify a point he made about Mensa. Barnes called Mega "the group of Mensa nerds." Mega is one of seven high-IQ societies and is in no way affiliated with Mensa. Mensa members are from all walks of life, and while you may find a few "nerds" among our 55,000 membership, you cannot brand all our members with this label. Mensa is primarily a social organization with only one membership requirement: a score in the top two percent of the population on a standardized IQ test. This does not mean the one-in-50 people in the U.S. qualified for Mensa membership carry pocket calculators, discuss Einstein's theory of relativity, and wear two-inch-thick glasses. Barnes's remark does nothing more than perpetuate the nerd myth associated with any highly intelligent individual, Mensan or non-Mensan.

LISA M. TROMBETTA
American Mensa, Ltd.
Brooklyn, New York

TRIAL AT HOME

To the editors:

In "De-Kafka" (December 19) Katie Hafner states that depositing Kafka's manuscript at Marbach is an idea that "takes some getting used to." As a U.S. citizen born in Czechoslovakia, as a Germanist, and as a scholar who frequently does research at the German Literary Archive in Marbach, I am delighted that Kafka's manuscript of *The Trial* will be deposited there. The founder and former director of the archive, Bernhard Zeller, the current director, Ulrich Ott, and the helpful staff personify the spirit of tolerance and reason. Moreover, Marbach has done more than any other library or archive in Germany—West or East—to heal wounds inflicted by the horrors of the Third Reich. The staff works tirelessly to restore Jewish writers to their rightful place in German literary history. If Hafner had counted the number of Jewish writers entered in the catalogs, examined any of the facsimile publications, and conducted research in the archive, then she would have to admit that Kafka's manuscript has found the least bureaucratic and most fitting home.

INGEBORG BAUMGARTNER
Albion, Michigan

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
FEBRUARY 13, 1989

THE NEXT WAR

"Competitive strategies," the hottest buzz-phrase in the Bush Pentagon, boils down to a very simple idea: in deciding how to allocate military resources, we should sometimes try to exploit Soviet strategic weaknesses cheaply, rather than always reflexively matching the Soviets missile for missile, tank for tank, strength for strength. There are two troubling aspects to all the excitement this idea is generating in defense circles.

First, the excitement suggests novelty, which in turn suggests that the Reagan Defense Department spent the past eight years oblivious to so useful and obvious (and, in fact, old) an idea. Sad to say, this is altogether plausible. Indeed, leave aside *competitive* strategies. Pentagon budgets during the Caspar Weinberger years were marked by a lack of any strategy whatsoever. More was just better, across the board.

The second troubling aspect of the "competitive strategies" rage is that it suggests a continuing preoccupation with the Soviet military, whereas the prudent deployment of defense resources calls increasingly for a broader view. As anyone who reads the op-ed pages can testify, a "multipolar" world is supposedly emerging, one in which the iron curtain will no longer be the center of international tension. Now that military budget cuts are all but certain, it would be nice for Pentagon officials—and other officials—to start thinking seriously about this and other op-ed scenarios. For budget cuts will bring changes of strategic emphasis willy-nilly; the changes might as well be for the better.

It should be noted, in fairness, that there has been at least one major attempt by the military establishment to think systematically about the new world. The Reagan Pentagon set up a committee consisting of the usual suspects—Kissinger, Brzezinski, et al.—to work on the problem, and last year they produced a report called "Sources of Change in the Future Security Environment."

The report has its virtues. For one thing, it is a reminder that, although the word "multipolar" these days crops up mainly in speculation about a "post-cold-war" world, it doesn't presuppose that the present redirection of Soviet foreign policy will continue. The term has been around for decades (Nixon and Kissinger were premature multipolarity enthusiasts back in the early 1970s), and it refers to a trend more inexorable than East-West détente: namely, however hostile the Soviet Union of the future, and however much of its budget goes to the military, its military strength relative to that of other nations is bound to decline.

For much of the postwar period, the Soviet Union possessed the world's second-largest economy. But the United States and Europe produced most of the world's marketable goods, and were the dynamos of technological and organizational innovation. American strategy, predicated on a direct Soviet threat and the absolute primacy of European defense, quite properly reflected those facts.

Today, the Soviet economy is smaller than that of Japan. If current projections hold true, shortly after the turn of the century it will be smaller than that of China, and of France and West Germany combined. Meanwhile, the Pacific Rim countries, though not quite as weighty an economic aggregation as Western Europe, are increasingly comparable to it, and are arguably ahead in terms of technological innovation and sheer economic energy.

This is not to say that the Soviet Union will soon fade from significance. Indeed, if Mikhail Gorbachev proves unable to turn the economy around, we may face an overarmed and possibly desperate opponent, one that has lost an old faith but lacks a new one. But it seems almost certain that as the Soviet Union's relative economic weight declines, its relative military force will too. New powers, with

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new security agendas, will emerge. India, for example, now has a nuclear submarine, a sophisticated arms industry, and, as its recent interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives indicate, the will to use force in the service of its interests. Japan has a surface navy comparable to that of Great Britain, and a sustained rate of increase in defense expenditure that is one of the highest in the world. The diffusion of military power is especially troublesome in the Middle East. The Iraqi army now has more main battle tanks than the Bundeswehr; it has pilots flying high-performance aircraft armed with sophisticated anti-ship missiles; it has the further advantage of having no scruples about and plenty of experience in the use of chemical weapons.

A second broad set of changes with which Pentagon planners must reckon stems from new technologies. Modern weapons already can fly hundreds of miles and deliver with pinpoint accuracy payloads several times more lethal than World War II-era explosives. New information technology will soon create weapons that are not merely "smart" but "brilliant"—aerial mines that circle around enemy airfields, looking for, and destroying, airplanes taking off; missiles that dispense "submunitions," which look on their own for enemy tanks.

Any adolescent excitement engendered by such prospects should fade rapidly with the realization that many of the new technologies will fall into the hands of unfriendly nations or organizations, some of which will behave less responsibly than the Soviet Union has even at its worst. Just look at the example of ballistic missiles. The United States and the Soviet Union have, by treaty, gotten out of the business of manufacturing surface-to-surface missiles with ranges greater than 500 kilometers but less than intercontinental. Unfortunately, just as we exited the ballistic missile market, plenty of other countries (China, India, Israel, Japan, to name a few) are entering it or are in a position to do so very easily. The most frightening customers—Libya, Syria—already have missiles with ranges up to 400 kilometers.

Unfortunately, all of the above resists pithy summary. The outlines of the unfolding new world are still vague, and its strategic implications are vaguer still. And the report left by the Reagan Pentagon studiously resists making much sense of it. The closest thing to a simple summary of the report is the prediction that the world of the future will be an alarming place. Maybe so. But what are we going to do about that—especially within current budget constraints?

This is a question not just of military strategy, but of foreign policy, even economic policy. It has been four decades since the formulation of NSC-68, the document that made containment our foreign policy keystone and thus broadly defined the agenda for defense spending in the coming decades. One could look at some of the good news in the world today and conclude that this document has borne fruit. One could also look at some of the clouds on the horizon and conclude that it is time to produce another document of comparable scope and moment.

NOTEBOOK

☐ JAPAN'S INTESTINAL FORTITUDE: When asked to explain the poor sales of U.S. beef in Japan, a Japanese minister of agriculture once claimed that Japanese had longer intestines than Westerners and thus could not digest beef as easily. What with the growing number of Japanese firms now buying U.S. cattle ranches to service Japanese markets, you'd think that Japanese intestines had shrunk in the past year. But don't jump to conclusions. Evolution takes time. Consider what Taichi Sakaiya, a former Ministry of International Trade and Industry official, recently had to say about why Japanese seem so averse to leisure time: "Compared to Westerners, the intestines of Japanese are extremely long, which happens to be a special trait of graminivorous animals, whose intake of calories is low and who require a long time to digest food. Generally speaking, carnivorous animals are quick in generating power when catching prey, but usually lie idle the rest of the time. . . . Thus, the Westerners' enjoyment of 'vacant time' and the Japanese's need to keep busy all the time stem from the differences in physical and mental makeup noted between carnivorous and graminivorous animals."

☐ TRUST, BUT VERIFY:

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(thanks to Aaron Goldman, Washington, D.C.)

Moscow's human rights record.

GULAG? WHAT GULAG?

IN SPITE of Mikhail Gorbachev's dramatic moves toward political reform, and his even more dramatic promises of more to come, police broke up a peaceful crowd in Minsk on October 30 as it tried to honor victims of Stalin's crimes, and dozens were arrested. In Leningrad on December 10 police dispersed a peaceful demonstration organized by the Democratic Union, a group that favors multiparty free elections. Semi-underground publications that form the "*glasnost* press" report that 200,000 Soviet troops are now stationed in Armenia, more than in Afghanistan—and not for earthquake relief, but to stifle nationalist unrest. Dissidents say that "Gorbachev has invaded Armenia the way Brezhnev did Czechoslovakia."

A new Soviet law on demonstrations is viewed by most human rights groups as a retrograde step designed to limit

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political expression. Although Moscow claims that all official "political prisoners" are free, the human rights group Helsinki Watch says that as many as 200 prisoners are being detained for political reasons, but under criminal statutes ranging from "hooliganism" to possession of foreign currency. The press operates more freely than ever before, but it still cannot criticize Gorbachev, Lenin, the KGB, or the Socialist system, and only government-authorized organizations can rent space, buy paper, and legally put out a publication. And, of course, the country is still a one-party dictatorship.

In spite of all this, the Reagan administration all but committed the United States to attend a 1991 human rights conference in Moscow called for in the final document of the European Security Conference in Vienna. Reagan didn't have to. Officials of the incoming Bush administration wish that he hadn't. But now that the deed is done, human rights activists here and in the Soviet bloc say there's an opportunity to use the conference as a lever to induce the Soviets to live up to the promises they've made—and perhaps push them to do even more.

ACCORDING TO BOTH State Department and National Security Council officials, the United States agreed to the Moscow conference because George Shultz wanted it. Shultz convinced Reagan even though President-elect Bush and his NSC adviser, Brent Scowcroft, transmitted their objections through outgoing NSC adviser Colin Powell, who also was opposed. Secretary of State James Baker testified to Congress that he, too, had reservations about the conference. Baker was accused by columnist William Safire of giving Shultz a go-ahead for the move, but that's not so. In fact, Shultz told aides right after the election that he was determined to be secretary of state right up to January 20 and not to involve the incoming administration in his policy-making.

Shultz wanted Vienna wrapped up because, he said, "at some point you've got to cash in what you've got." And Shultz, along with the State Department's human rights chief, Richard Schifter, thought they had got quite a lot over the last two years since Moscow first asked for the 1991 conference. The United States wanted political prisoners freed, Schifter said, and their number has dropped from 750 to 60 disputed cases and another 60 cases in which the prisoner is unaccounted for. Helsinki Watch says that Schifter is failing to dispute enough cases. The United States wanted progress on immigration, and last year more than 20,000 Jews were permitted to leave (still well under the 51,000 record for 1979), plus 47,000 ethnic Germans, 10,000 Armenians, and more than 1,000 Pentecostal Christians. And, Schifter said, the United States wanted guarantees that human rights reforms would be institutionalized, and got promises to that effect in Gorbachev's December 7 speech to the United Nations and in the Vienna pledges.

The Vienna document commits the 35 nations signing it to respect their citizens' right to leave and return to their country, to allow religious instruction, respect the privacy of mail, let individuals and groups obtain and distribute written material of all kinds, allow citizens to "contribute actively" to the promotion of human rights, and write laws to guarantee these and other rights.

Schifter said the 1991 conference will provide leverage against "backsliding." If there is backsliding, the United States can refuse to attend the conference, although critics of the administration think this will require the equivalent of a new Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—and will be greeted with about as much international support as Jimmy Carter's boycott of the 1980 Olympics.

Finally, according to Schifter, the Reagan administration decided in favor of the Moscow conference as a way of helping Gorbachev, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, and their reform party against the conservative opposition. "The debate is about basic doctrine," he said. "If the reformers win, I think we may be seeing the death knell of Leninism. . . . This has long-term significance for both the domestic situation and foreign relations." Schifter said, "I was astonished at how many in the Soviet establishment believe as we do, in the principles of the Enlightenment."

Critics of the Reagan decision are scarcely confined to cynics or archconservatives. For example, Joseph Fromm of the International Institute for Strategic Studies says it was "a major concession and premature, a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on their human rights performance. . . . It's what I thought Reagan would avoid—excessive zeal, euphoria." According to Stephen Sestanovich, a former Reagan NSC staffer now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Gorbachev wants visible signs that he's accepted as a member in good standing of the family of civilized nations. Our leverage lies in making him seem not yet a member. We could easily have put this off until two years from now."

INDEED, NO SOONER was the Vienna document signed than Eastern European countries indicated by word and deed that they were not bound by it. Czechoslovakia and East Germany both conducted mass crackdowns on demonstrators. And in the Soviet Union, Andrei Sakharov declared in an interview with *U.S. News and World Report* that "plans for a human rights conference in Moscow should be suspended" because of the suppression of Armenian nationalists, including the jailing of 12 activists in Moscow. He accused Gorbachev of pushing through "many undemocratic laws" that could be used for repression.

It's hard to see how the Bush administration could "suspend" plans for the Moscow conference so soon after it was agreed to, but Soviet émigrés such as Dimitri Simes of the Carnegie Endowment and historian Ludmilla Alexeyeva, plus groups such as Helsinki Watch and Freedom House, say that Bush, the allies, and the international human rights community should establish clear criteria for finally deciding whether to attend the Moscow conference, and for deciding what to do and say there.

According to Helsinki Watch, for example, the new law on demonstrations allows only approved organizations to march and requires advance approval of the banners to be

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Horowitz Plays Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23; Sonata No. 13. La Scala Opera Orchestra/Giulini. DG *DIGITAL* 115436

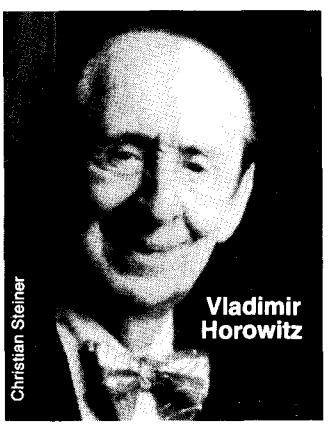
Handel, Water Music The English Concert/Pinnock. "Quite the best performance...now on the market."–Gramophone Archiv *DIGITAL* 115306

Holst, The Planets Montreal Symphony Orchestra/Dutoit. "The best available on both LP and CD." –Gramophone London *DIGITAL* 115448

Andrew Lloyd Webber, Variations; more Julian Lloyd Webber, cello. Philips *DIGITAL* 115473

Vangelis: Direct The Motion Of Stars, more. Arista 100470

Tchaikovsky, 1812 Overture; Romeo & Juliet; Nutcracker Suite Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Solti. London *DIGITAL* 125179



Handel, Messiah (Highlights) Musica Sacra/Westenburg. Hallelujah Chorus, I Know That My Redeemer Liveth, more. RCA *DIGITAL* 153586

Jascha Heifetz: Tchaikovsky & Mendelssohn, Violin Concertos Chicago Symphony/Reiner; Boston Symphony/Munch. RCA 104833

Ravel, Daphnis et Chloé (Complete) Montreal Symphony/Dutoit. "An absolute dream performance." –Stereo Review London *DIGITAL* 115520

Mozart, Overtures Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields/Marriner. Don Giovanni, Marriage Of Figaro, 7 more. Angel *DIGITAL* 134267

Brahms, Cello Sonatas Yo-Yo Ma, cello; Emanuel Ax, piano. "Distinguished...handsomely recorded."–Stereo Review RCA *DIGITAL* 154044

Kronos Quartet: White Man Sleeps Music of Ives, Volans, Hassell, Coleman, Johnston & Bartók. Nonesuch *DIGITAL* 140256

Mozart, Requiem Leipzig Radio Choir; Dresden State Orchestra/Schreier. "Exceptionally satisfying."–High Fidelity Philips *DIGITAL* 115039

Slatkin Conducts Russian Showpieces Pictures At An Exhibition, Classical Symphony, 3 more. RCA *DIGITAL* 154358

Pops In Love The Boston Pops/Williams. Clair de lune, Gymnopédies Nos. 1 & 2, Albinoni Adagio, Fantasia On Greensleeves, Pachelbel Canon, more. Philips *DIGITAL* 125230

Michael Feinstein: Isn't It Romantic Title song, How About You, My Favorite Year, A Fine Romance, 7 more. Elektra 172393

Horowitz In Moscow The historic return! Music by Scarlatti, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Liszt, Chopin, Scriabin, Schumann, others. DG *DIGITAL* 125264

Mozart, The Piano Quartets Beaux Arts Trio; Bruno Giuranna, viola. "Absolutely indispensable." –Stereo Review Philips *DIGITAL* 115271

Copland, Billy The Kid & Rodeo (Complete Ballets) Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra/Slatkin. Angel *DIGITAL* 141491

The Canadian Brass: High, Bright, Light & Clear Air On The G String, Masterpiece Theatre Theme, others. RCA *DIGITAL* 144529

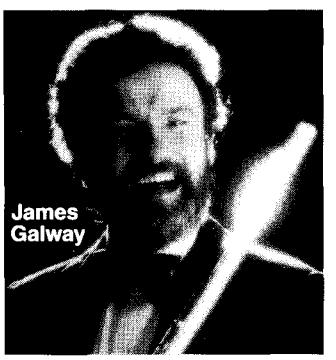
Pops In Space John Williams leads The Boston Pops in music from Star Wars, Close Encounters, Superman, more. Philips *DIGITAL* 105392

Pachelbel, Canon in D Also includes other works by Pachelbel & Fasch. Maurice André, trumpet; Paillard Chamber Orchestra. RCA 133877

Gershwin, Rhapsody in Blue; An American In Paris; Concerto Pittsburgh Symphony/Previn (pianist & conductor). Philips *DIGITAL* 115437

Vivaldi, The Four Seasons The English Concert/Pinnock. "The finest recording of [it] I've heard."–High Fidelity Archiv *DIGITAL* 115356

Sousa, Stars & Stripes Forever Philip Jones Ensemble. Plus Semper Fidelis, Washington Post, more. London *DIGITAL* 115051



James Galway–Greatest Hits Memory, Angel Of Music, Perhaps Love, Clair de lune, The Pink Panther, Sabre Dance, Danny Boy, 13 more. RCA 173233

Dvořák, Symphony No. 9 (From The New World) Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Solti. London *DIGITAL* 115168

Teresa Stratas Sings Kurt Weill Nonesuch 124748

Artur Rubinstein: Chopin, 14 Waltzes RCA 101987

Beethoven, Symphony No. 6 (Pastorale) Plus Egmont Overture. Royal Philharmonic Orch./Previn. RCA *DIGITAL* 143612

Rossini, Overtures Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. The Barber Of Seville, The Turk In Italy, Tancredi, 5 others. DG *DIGITAL* 115527

Gregorian Chant Schola of the Hofburgkapelle, Vienna. 10 Propers from Graduale Romanum; more. Philips *DIGITAL* 115434

Alicia de Larrocha: Falla, Nights In The Gardens Of Spain Plus rhapsodies by Albéniz & Turina. London *DIGITAL* 115410

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The Canadian Brass–More Greatest Hits Barber Adagio, Golliwog's Cakewalk, La Cumparsita, many more. RCA *DIGITAL* 164348

Into The Woods Bernadette Peters & original cast. Title song, No One Is Alone, Last Midnight, Agony, more. RCA *DIGITAL* 161656

Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4 Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Solti. London *DIGITAL* 125038

Liz Story: Speechless Title song, others. RCA/Novus 100494

Mozart, Symphony No. 41 (Jupiter); more Orchestra of the 18th Century/Brüggen. Philips *DIGITAL* 115297

Beethoven, Symphonies Nos. 4 & 5 Academy of Ancient Music conducted by Christopher Hogwood. L'Oiseau-Lyre *DIGITAL* 115009

Stravinsky, Petrouchka; more Montreal Symphony Orchestra/Dutoit. London *DIGITAL* 115331

Debussy, La Mer; Nocturnes Boston Symphony Orchestra/Davis. "The BSO is in tip-top form throughout."—Ovation Philips *DIGITAL* 115068

Bach, Organ Works Daniel Chorzempa plays the Toccata & Fugue in D Minor; more. Philips *DIGITAL* 115193

Plácido Domingo Sings Tangos DG 105302

Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 (Choral) On original instruments! London Classical Players/Norrington. Angel *DIGITAL* 100467

Kiri te Kanawa: Ave Maria Philips *DIGITAL* 115213

Perlman: Mozart, Violin Concertos Nos. 3 & 5 Vienna Philharmonic/Levine. "Radiantly sumptuous."—High Fidelity DG *DIGITAL* 115146

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displayed, and permission is often denied. A proposed new press law will continue to limit publishing rights to approved organizations. Political prisoners have been freed from jail, but only a handful have been professionally and politically rehabilitated.

Besides truly reforming, the human rights groups say, the Soviets should agree, in connection with a Moscow conference, to allow in everyone who wants to attend and speak, and to ensure that what they say is fully disseminated to the Soviet public. Finally, according to Simes, the United States cannot make it a condition of attendance in Moscow that the Soviets extend freedom to Eastern Europe, grant autonomy to Estonia and Armenia, or see to it that the Berlin Wall is torn down. "But the Soviets want us to crown Gorbachev as the Prince of Light," he said. "For Gorbachev to be hailed in 1991, he ought to have set his people free."

MORTON M. KONDRACKE

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

TAR BABY

ON THE FIRST full workday of the Bush presidency, January 23, Vice President Quayle met with 15 abortion foes in the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building. The leaders of nearly every pro-life group—John Willke of the National Right to Life Committee, former White House aide Gary Bauer, a fellow from Knights of Columbus, another from Episcopalians for Life, etc.—were there. So was John Sununu, the White House chief of staff. The pro-lifers were friendly. To satisfy any doubters, Quayle insisted the entire administration is committed to the pro-life agenda. The only jarring note came when one pro-lifer told Quayle, "We really know that you and President Bush stand for the Christian values this nation is based on." David Zwiebel of Agudath Israel of America and Quayle aide William Kristol smiled knowingly at each other. They're Jewish. After 40 minutes the pro-lifers left, happy. "They didn't want to pick a fight," a White House official said.

They may get one anyway. As hard as Bush tries to satisfy them, he always comes up short. His message to the pro-life rally on the Ellipse, held an hour after the Quayle meeting, was anti-abortion gospel. The Supreme Court's *Roe* v. *Wade* decision that legalized abortion "was wrong and should be overturned," he said. "I think America needs a human life amendment"—in other words, a national law outlawing abortion in most instances. But good as that rhetoric was, pro-lifers are mad at Bush for nominating Louis Sullivan as secretary of health and human services. Sullivan's position on abortion changes, depending on who's asking. Unlike Ronald Reagan, whose HHS secretaries were as wobbly on abortion as Sullivan, Bush gets no leeway. "Reagan had all this previous equity that Bush doesn't have," says Bauer, the president of the Family Research Council. "His conversion is relatively late."

Bush is uncomfortable talking about abortion, as he demonstrated in his first debate with Michael Dukakis last September. That's why he didn't meet with the pro-life delegation or address them in person. He read his two-minute speech over the phone instead. It was a one-way connection. There's also a political reason for keeping some distance. Bush wants pro-lifers to stay in the Republican coalition. But he doesn't want to embrace them too passionately, since the public is more pro-choice than pro-life. The worst part for Bush is that the abortion issue never goes away. It's his political tar baby.

REAGAN DID Bush no favor by leaving behind the issue of fetal tissue experimentation. This is a matter of enormous concern to pro-lifers. They regard medical research using fetal tissue—aimed particularly at combating Alzheimer's and Parkinson's—as inhuman. Medical scientists strongly favor it. An executive order banning the use of fetal tissue was drafted for Reagan. The Justice Department was unopposed, but HHS was dead set against it. Reagan had the draft order for the final 48 hours of his presidency. He did nothing. Now Bush has to decide.

The Sullivan nomination is more trouble still. Not only is Sullivan a friend of the Bush family, particularly Barbara Bush, but he's also the only black picked for the Cabinet. Bush had promised pro-lifers during the campaign the one thing they wanted, an HHS secretary opposed to abortion. Sullivan is, and isn't. On December 18, five days before his nomination was announced, he told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that he supported a woman's right to an abortion. That's also what he told a number of sympathetic senators when he made the rounds on Capitol Hill before Bush's inauguration. But that's not what he told Representative Vin Weber and three other pro-lifers who talked to him at length on December 21. According to them, Sullivan said he opposes *Roe* v. *Wade* and believes that abortion is murder. The only pro-life position that he rejected involves medical research. As a doctor, he said he's against limiting research, even on fetal tissue.

As it turns out, Sullivan has two positions on abortion, one reflecting his true beliefs, the other Bush's position. He spelled this out in a second interview with the *Journal-Constitution* on December 20. "I know that my private situation, and not the public position, is that there should be that right [to abortion] and indeed that is the law as it stands now," he said. "At the same time, I am aware that [Bush] feels that that should not be the case, and I would have to as secretary . . . carry out his policies there. . . . I frankly entered this knowing that in a political world one has to accept things that I might perhaps privately wish were otherwise."

Got it? Sullivan favors the right to an abortion, but he'll ignore that at HHS and follow Bush's anti-abortion posi-

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tion. This was enough to win Weber's endorsement in December, since Weber figured Bush was going to nominate Sullivan anyway. And it allowed Marlin Fitzwater, Bush's press secretary, to declare on January 24 that Sullivan's views are the same as Bush's on abortion. But it didn't satisfy most of the pro-life crowd. Weber now plans to attend Sullivan's confirmation hearing on February 1 to see if he contradicts what he told him in December.

Sullivan has a second problem. Back in December when he wanted Weber and other pro-lifers to endorse him, he agreed to fill the upper reaches of HHS with abortion foes. He promised to make Dr. James Mason, the head of the Centers for Disease Control, assistant secretary for health, and Kay James, a former official of the National Right to Life Committee, the assistant secretary for public affairs. He also agreed to hire Patrick Fagan of the conservative Free Congress Foundation as an executive assistant and to retain Nabers Cabiness as an assistant secretary. Republican Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire says an official of the Bush transition told him the appointments were all but assured. Bush suggested the same. In a phone call to Weber thanking him for backing Sullivan, Bush said the four names were acceptable and would strengthen HHS. Sullivan made no move to sign them up until Sununu ordered him to on January 24. Sununu also dispatched Constance Horner to "babysit" Sullivan as HHS deputy secretary.

Sullivan's nomination isn't in jeopardy, but Bush's relationship with the pro-life movement is. He stands to alienate them as one of his first acts as president. "Sullivan can't be defeated, but it could be messy, especially if Weber challenges his truthfulness," says a White House official. Even Humphrey, who is avidly anti-abortion, won't oppose Sullivan, on the ground that this would be "untoward" in the case of Bush's only black Cabinet member.

In his heart of hearts, Bush would probably be most comfortable with a centrist position on abortion, one that seeks to curb abortions without outlawing them. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh has roughly taken this position. "I'm opposed to abortion on demand, and I'm opposed to the notion that abortion ought to be viewed as a substitute to birth control practices," he said on CNN's "Evans and Novak." Thornburgh wants *Roe* v. *Wade* tossed out, but he stops short of urging all 50 states to respond by banning abortions. He refuses to express an opinion on whether life begins at conception.

Bush's pro-life rhetoric may have made it impossible for him to retreat to that position. For now, he'd settle for having pro-lifers leave him alone. At the session with Quayle, Sununu spoke up twice. He said the anti-abortion movement should settle for getting rid of *Roe* v. *Wade* and not worry about passing a constitutional amendment making abortion illegal nationwide. And he said they shouldn't wait for *Roe* v. *Wade* to be overturned, but begin their lobbying efforts in state legislatures immediately. That way, they'd be out of Bush's hair for a while.

FRED BARNES

Inaugural anthropology.

SCHLOCK CITY

ALL WEEK LONG I waited for *the* misguided essay that would try to capture the Bush essence in the same way the *Washington Post*'s 1984 "Rat Pack Inaugural" piece tried to sum up Reagan. "Rat Pack style," it announced, in words that still eerily resonate, "has . . . resurfaced . . . at the very center of national life—in the person of Ronald Reagan." But there was no dominant theme in 1989, and precious little Rat Packery. Frank Sinatra was on hand at the Entertainment Gala Thursday night, but it was a listless Sinatra. In '84, angered by unflattering details in the Rat Pack piece, he threatened to rub out the world's journalists: "You're all dead, every one of you!" This year he shuffled on and sang Jerry Lewis's theme song ("You'll Never Walk Alone") even worse than Jerry does. Then he rambled through an intro ("My greeting to you and your Barbara fum my Barbara and me") to a song that didn't exist. The band, though cued, remained silent. "You got nothin'?" Frank said to his befuddled band leader. Then, angrier, "No? That was it? The *song*—!" But it was lights out and on to a commercial. Next stop for Ol' Rheum Eyes, who unwisely called Bush "a chip off the Old Gipper": presidential-chumminess Siberia.

In re the style-of-the-presidency thing, there was much confusion. Journalists coughed up every possible description of what Bush and his men will be like. I know—Bush is a political chameleon who defies easy characterization. And the raiments of power hang untailored on the gangly new presidential frame. But . . . still. Among other things, we were told to expect: a continuation of "Reagan-style" governance with a moderating touch of Jerry Fordism; something like that, but without Reagan's nouveau-riche garishness; "a cross between the return of Jerry Ford and the second coming of Nelson Rockefeller"; "a very hip Eisenhower"; a "spring colt" president who will be reined in by budgetary constraints; a chrysalis president who will in time emerge as his Own Man; a New Breeze (Hugh Sidey, alone among journalists, I'm afraid, gnawed on this phrase and found it meaty); a style somewhere on the spectrum between Carter's micro-management and Reagan's casual m.o.; and a New Incompetence. "Bush may think the get-along-by-going-along approach is just the application of kinder-and-gentler-ism," George Will dispatched from somewhere near Ice Station Sinatra, "but it is a recipe for continued congressional ascendency."

On the purely stylistic front, there was similar confusion. There was one attempt, in the *Washington Times*, to produce a broadbrush essay on the Bush administration's atmospherics, but it rang false. Bush, it argued, will usher in a "Tex-Preppy" sensibility that will, if I've read this correctly, make us crave pink-and-green Hollandaise sauce on our burritos. Many focused attention and adoration on our new First Lady, Mrs. Not Nancy. (Actual name: Barbara Bush.) Meanwhile, alarm bells continued to sound

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about the surrogate target for Nancy-loathers, wife of incoming Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher. Georgette, in case you missed the profiles in *Vanity Fair* or the *Washington Post Magazine*, is flashy, formidable, flame-haired, and perceived as vulgar by Washington's reigning society mafia. (She wears gloves at the beach, had permanent eyebrows drawn on by a Gary, Indiana, tattoo artist, brags shamelessly about her greedhead lifestyle, and owns a company that produces facial cream made of "stabilized sheep placenta.") She has crossed Washington's elite once already—by showing up at a Kennedy Center gala . . . uninvited! For now, Inside-the-Beltwayians are rattling down a tricky double track on this: We hate Georgette, but as long as she upsets our insufferable society buttheads, we're cheering her on.

The Man himself spent the week sending Gregarious Feller signals—the "impromptu" foray from his parade car to shake hands with citizens, the "unexpected" visits to restaurants and shopping centers around the capital city, the "spontaneous" decision to jump onstage with Lee Atwater, pooch out his lips in Mick Jagger-style, and pretend to play an electric guitar labeled "The Prez." But this could be a temporary act, like Barbara's agreeable decision to be style-conscious for a week. I sure hope so. The idea behind this Work Hard/Play Hard stuff seems to be to assure Americans that Bush is healthy and vigorous. But doesn't anybody at the White House remember the Failed Carter Years? Carter racked up awful karmic taint when he got on stage with Dizzy Gillespie and sang "Salt Peanuts," and the real cause of his downfall was not the hostage crisis, but that picture of him collapsed and wheezing during a long-distance run. Besides, as this magazine pointed out weeks ago, the Quayle-leery American people want a safe Bush, a mollycoddled Bush.

From all the confusion, there emerged one unassailable Bushstyle Truth: Bush and his political handlers believe, as Reagan did, that the way to the people's heart is paved with unshucked corn. Among the celebs schlepped in for various inaugural events were Claude "Sheriff Lobo" Akins, Jimmy Dean, Neil Sedaka, Brooke "I'll Do 70 Bob Hope Specials A Year, If Bob Needs Me" Shields, Bob Hope, every available Osmond, Trini Lopez, Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr., Lyle Waggoner, Mark Spitz, Ricky Schroder, and that most noxious of Reagan-era schlockmeisters, country singer Lee Greenwood, who penned the official GOP anthem, "I'm Proud To Be An American." (Again, Bushies, ignore history at your peril. Carter had the same taste for country-music ersatzum.) Someone also saw fit to have Tommy Tune on hand singing, "You were once a link in the chain of command / But now you're up there leading the band!" And the New Breeze brought with it oil-soaked lounge iguana Julio Iglesias.

Could it be that Bush & Company know something I don't? I think so. This was illustrated with chilling clarity at one of the inaugural events I attended, the American Presidential Pageant, a stage show performed at D.A.R.-Constitution Hall. As one reporter put it, the content of this (not the style, which utilized very modern smoke-bomb and strobe-light technology) seemed right out of 1953. Still, the people kept leaping from their seats to cheer, cry, gasp, shake their heads in wonder, and take snapshots. I'm not making fun of them. I'm just trying to figure out what it is about dramatic background music, Patrick Henry ("Sir, our chains are forrrrrrged!"), brother-against-brother *tableaux vivants*, and arias adapted from the Preamble ("Tranqueelity. Insurrrre domestic tranqueelity") that so excite adult patriotism glands.

The show's most telling moment came when the producers nimbly finessed the '60s. Buddy Ebsen's narration went straight from Eisenhower to . . . the Moon Landing, and then backtracked to apply this patch-up: "The pace of events became more than we could handle, and *some* Americans began to question America's traditional values. . . . For a time in America, bitterness and divisions caused by an unpopular war, caused Americans to seemingly lose their sense of purpose. Many began to doubt our system, and pride in our nation became something to be . . . *embarrassed* about." Nixon, Ford, and Carter were passed over in the rush to hail the Reagan Restoration.

RIGHT AFTER the pageant I performed a patriotic exercise of my own. The best way to appreciate the glory of our system (that a polyglot nation, made up of factions that despise each other, has existed 200 years with only a few dustups) was to go straight from this event to one of several available anti-inaugural protest concerts. I chose one put on by the Christic Institute, a group that believes President Bush is in for a Nixon-style fall over the Iran-*contra* affair. The concert, held downtown at the decrepit Warner Theater, featured folk singer Michelle Shocked, Kris Kristofferson, and Crosby & Nash. At the entrance there was a tense pamphleteering war between Christic lefties and anti-Christic righties who drove in from Virginia. (This was broken up by a bipartisan bouncer who came out and said, "Ya'll all want to be *aig*heads and get arrested? Then just keep on, OK?") Inside was ample evidence as to why, no matter what stylistic mistakes the right makes, the left is still losing. Kristofferson, the lumpy balladeer of left-wing know-nothingism, came out and said, "Are they really spendin' $40 million on this inaugural thing? Hell—" *twang twang* "—that don't surprise me. Navy shot down two Libyan jets the other day. Seems they mistook them for two Iranian airbuses fulla *tourists*." He then sang an Iglesias-melody ode to the Sandinistas, which went, "Sanday-nistaaaah! You have lived up to your name . . . May your spirit never die! Hold a candle to the darkness! You're the keeper of the flame! Sanday-nistaaaaah!" And so on. At the end the crowd cried, gasped, cheered, huzzahed, etc. And one important thing didn't happen: no burly men in Style Police uniforms took the stage and trundled Kris off to a small, dark, damp cell. This really *is* a great country.

ALEX HEARD

Alex Heard is a free-lance writer in Washington.

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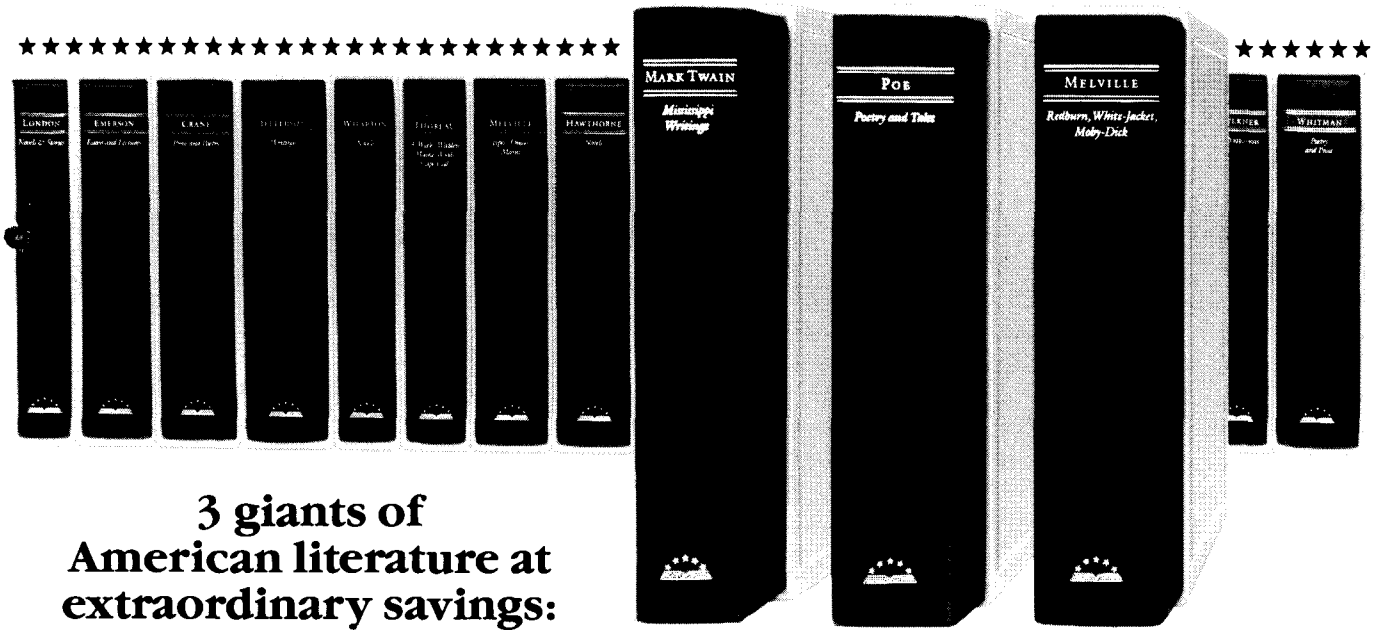

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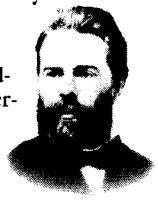

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Bush's windy inaugural address.

Go Fly A Kite

ONE OF THE THEMES of George Bush's inauguration, 200 years after Washington's, was "George to George," and after a salute to Ronald Reagan more appropriate to an Episcopalian church bazaar—"I thank you for the wonderful things that you have done for America"—Bush invoked the spirit of the first president. It was fortunate for him that no one following his address had at his elbow the text of Washington's lofty first inaugural, with which he was helped, it is assumed, by Alexander Hamilton. Bush's speech was more or less written for him by Peggy Noonan, formerly of Aetna Insurance Company and CBS News, where she wrote radio commentaries for Dan Rather to recite. The comparison with Hamilton as a speechwriter is not kind.

When he at last turned to address the nation, Bush began: "We meet on democracy's front porch, a good place to talk as neighbors and friends." We are down home, folks. Rock in your chair. Nod. Noonan had decided that Bush should be given a homey voice. When you traveled with Reagan, she told Maureen Dowd in an interview with the *New York Times*, "People were struck by his radiance [sic] and looked at him with slack jaws. With Bush, it was cuter." She "dissected Mr. Bush, and gave him a simpler, more self-deprecating style." Indeed, she led him to conclude his inaugural by eschewing "leadership as high drama and the sounds of trumpets calling." No one was looking for trumpet calls, but one word for some other elevation of language and so of vision. Bush followed the cuter course Noonan prescribed for him.

On their front porch, he told the American people, they could snooze. "We live in a peaceful, prosperous time." Don't worry, folks. Even the *New York Times* was sedated. In its editorial the next day it said: "President Bush, taking office in a tranquil time . . . a time of unusual calm. . . . Americans now see no crisis. Indeed, they don't see much wrong at all." Bush was only preparing to administer a stronger tranquilizer. In the very next sentence he said: "For a new breeze is blowing; . . . in man's heart, if not in fact, the day of the dictator is over. The totalitarian era is passing." Anyone hearing these astonishing words must have recalled Gerald Ford's statement in the second debate with Jimmy Carter in 1976: ". . . There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. . . . I don't believe the Romanians consider themselves dominated by Soviet Russia. I don't believe the Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union."

Bush's statements in their sweep were even more fatuous. But cute. Not only have there always been dictatorships; not only are dictatorships, of left and right, numerous in the world today; not only is the movement toward democracy very fragile; not only may the Soviet Union be pushed to a kind of right-wing nationalism akin to fascism, which would indeed be terrifying; but if Eastern Europe were to erupt from the Baltic to the Bosporus in open insurgency, neither Reagan nor Bush, nor any of their advisers, have suggested what the United States could or should do. Bush told the nation to sleep, when we are sitting on a powder keg.

The phrase "a new breeze is blowing" was repeated in the following paragraph in the context of domestic policy, leading to the electrifying exhortation: "There's new ground to be broken and new action to be taken." The invocation of the breeze—on democracy's breezeway?—is one of the few efforts at rhetorical flourish in the inaugural. It came directly from the experience of Noonan. She was sitting in the White House, a notebook in her lap, trying to compose notes for Bush's address. In the corridor there was noise and laughter from the aides, secretaries, and Secret Service agents of the incoming president. "It felt like a new breeze. There was a literal movement of air." Thus is oratory born in the age of the speechwriter.

Metaphor is not just a decoration. It should be one of the sinews of oratory. However curiously, Reagan's few simple metaphors had a power, because they genuinely seemed to come out of himself. But the metaphors in Bush's inaugural are limp—". . . freedom is like a beautiful kite that can go higher and higher with the breeze." Freedom—a kite? A thing of sticks and paper, dancing with no direction on a string? This is child's play. But then freedom is also a breeze, not a wind, let alone a gale, but a waft of air stroking the cheeks of the sleepers on the porch.

"New" was used 14 times in the inaugural. But new what? "New Deal" and "New Frontier" were charged with specific applications and allusions to the American experience. And the "New Nationalism" of Theodore Roosevelt and the "New Freedom" of Woodrow Wilson were invested with powerful meanings from the economic, social, and political challenges of the time. But Bush could speak only of the new ground to be broken, new action to be taken, a new engagement . . . phrases with no direction or meaning.

The whole of the inaugural was designed to make the American people doze. "For the first time in history . . . we don't have to talk late into the night about which form of government is better." So even the task of political philosophers is over. In this mood the exhortations to a more selfless society were emptied into ears already filled with droning. David Broder in the *Washington Post* oafishly compared these passages to what he said were similar passages in FDR's first inaugural. But he quoted only the milder of FDR's reproofs. He did not quote FDR's ringing attack on the practices of the "unscrupulous money changers" who "stand indicted in the court of public opinion," just as Bush did not refer to today's money changers who stand indicted in the courts of law—some of them having contributed more than $100,000 to Bush's campaign. "The money changers have fled from the high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore the temple to the ancient truths," said FDR. Bush's appeal to old values offered no such challenge. He sought to make no enemies, and such a man cannot lead. You cannot address a nation in short pants.

Other attempted images were equally flaccid. "This is a

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time when the future seems a door you can walk right through—into a room called Tomorrow." Everything is sunny. "The new breeze blows, a page turns, the story unfolds, . . . a chapter begins," and in their sleep Americans heard the sound of a tinkling cymbal.

HENRY FAIRLIE

Breaking the drug-approval log jam.

RX FOR THE FDA

DEATH HAS A WAY of creating strange bedfellows, and death by AIDS is no exception. *Wall Street Journal* editorialists and others on the far right, who have long complained that the Food and Drug Administration constrains commerce by overexamining new drugs before approving them, have now been joined by gay activists and some on the left, who are suddenly advocating immediate access to unproven therapies. This could be the beginning of a powerful consensus behind a position whose merit is increasingly evident: the current system of drug approval is overly cautious and needlessly slow. Though AIDS offers the most vivid example of the system's deficiencies, reform could benefit victims of numerous severely debilitating or fatal diseases, such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

Let us meet the primary players in the drama of experimental drug development, and learn their roles and motivations. At center stage are the patient, the pharmaceutical company, the research physician, and the FDA. The supporting cast includes viscerally anti-regulation *Wall Street Journal* editors, newly anti-regulation gay activists, charlatans at home and abroad, and the insurance industry. The extras are generally found in Congress. Vocal as all the players have been, they have yet to fashion a very productive social theater.

The person with AIDS is generally young, highly aware of his disease, desperately seeking the best available therapy, and cognizant of the limited therapeutic options. In the ninth year of the epidemic in the United States, he has probably seen friends and lovers deteriorate and die from the disease. He is frightened, angry, and frustrated, and he finds it difficult to believe that modern medicine in the *premier monde* is unable to deliver a cure. Realizing that most treatment against the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is experimental, he is willing to take his chances and try something unproven. Yet when he seeks entry into experimental drug programs, admission is often denied. Candidates must meet certain criteria, such as no concomitant treatment with other standard or experimental drugs, no history of multiple types of infection or malignancy, etc. Most AIDS patients don't fit the bill. Shut out from receiving an experimental treatment that has been shown in lab tests to inhibit the HIV virus, patients are forced to obtain the drug from unregulated underground factories or to seek treatment with unproven nostrums.

To AIDS patients whose lives are measured in months, the FDA's current time-consuming system for ensuring the safety and efficacy of new drugs offers cold comfort. The regulatory process has three phases. Phase I encompasses the first human use of a new drug, and is intended to determine its safety, generally in patients with an advanced form of the disease who have exhausted other treatment options. Phase II begins only if phase I reveals an acceptable level of toxicity. This phase provides the first detailed evidence of the drug's effectiveness, testing differing dosages and methods of administration. The third phase includes pivotal studies that may prove efficacy, generally by comparing the effects of the new drug with the effects of established therapy or placebos. Completion of phase III leads to a comprehensive review by the FDA. If the drug is approved, it can be prescribed by the physician as he sees fit. All told, approval generally takes several years to complete.

The profile of a drug's safety and efficacy is usually obtained by observing patients with relatively unimpaired organ function. This is done so that the metabolism of the agent (by the liver, kidney, etc.), its toxic effects (on the bone marrow, gastrointestinal tract, etc.), and its benefits are clear. AIDS, which can incapacitate the lungs, brain, liver, eyes, bone marrow, and gastrointestinal tract, does not play by the conventional rules of drug development. If many vital systems are deteriorating concurrently, it is quite difficult to distinguish the metabolism of the drug and its toxic effects from the symptoms of the disease itself. Since many AIDS sufferers are also intravenous drug addicts, sorting out the damage done by the disease from the damage done by the illicit drugs is difficult at best. Nonetheless, we must respond to the real world of the disorder; the complexity of the disease should not bar the patient from access to potentially life-saving therapy.

A CASE IN POINT is ganciclovir, also known as DHPG, an experimental drug that has been given to over 5,000 patients infected with the cytomegalovirus, a virus of the herpes family. In AIDS patients, the cytomegalovirus often infects the eyes and results in permanent blindness. Ganciclovir preserves sight in most patients. But it is damaging to bone marrow, and it must be taken indefinitely by intravenous injection, or else the cytomegalovirus reactivates. The FDA has not yet approved ganciclovir, largely because it was never directly compared with a placebo, although its clinical benefit is apparent. To obtain the drug, the AIDS patient with retinitis must enter a program of experimental therapy that excludes him from receiving other drugs that may work against the primary infection, HIV. Unable to forgo ganciclovir for fear of blindness, he is thus unable to pursue treatment for the underlying cause of his immune deficiency.

Such Kafkaesque choices are hard to untangle in a system that provides little incentive to take risks. Consider the

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case of a pharmaceutical company that has pumped tens of millions of dollars into research and production to bring an experimental drug into clinical study. The company knows that the primary task of the FDA is assessing the safety of a new drug (phases I and II), with subsequent tests for efficacy (phase III). The company has no incentive to test a drug in patients with multiple problems that make the assessment of toxicity and efficacy difficult. Since profit is the company's goal, and first entry into the marketplace is a key to sales, the best path is that of least resistance. Moreover, even with relatively well-understood drugs, the FDA often brings up risks that are highly theoretical. And because the FDA's roster of reviewing officials can change quickly, so too can its requirements for clinical development. Keeping clinical tests as simple and controlled as possible makes satisfying the FDA easier.

YET THE FDA IS NOT the villain in this drama. The agency is understaffed, overwhelmed by a flood of submitted studies, not necessarily expert in the biology of the disorder, working with criteria for drug evaluation that are rigid and unresponsive to new diseases, and lacking any incentive to take risks. Chastened by its disastrously hasty approval of thalidomide several decades ago, the FDA lives in fear of approving a drug and later learning it has an unrecognized toxic side effect. Potential risk, rather than benefit, attracts most of the FDA's attention. This pathological, if understandable, caution makes the agency an easy mark for the anger of the patient, physician, and drug company, not to mention grandstanding legislators.

Enter the gay activists, charlatans, and *Wall Street Journal* editorialists. The *Journal* is incensed by the denial of any American's right to have virtually anything he wants without government meddling. Caveat emptor! Let drugs rapidly enter the doctor's office, be given willy-nilly to patients, and eventually rise or fall on their merits. The individual patient and his doctor can figure out the risks and benefits by themselves. There is a kernel of truth in this prescription: after all, the ultimate place of the drug in the therapeutic armamentarium is determined only through long-term use after FDA approval. On the other hand, the first rush of enthusiasm about a drug may prove wrong. Potent agents like suramin or HPA-23 (the AIDS therapy Rock Hudson received in Paris) appeared promising in the test tube and in the first few patients treated but then turned out to be flops. And because suramin had unrecognized toxic effects, it probably hurt many AIDS patients and hastened their deaths. If it had been rapidly distributed, à la the *Wall Street Journal*, it would have done more damage before falling by the wayside.

The flip side of the suramin story is AZT, the only currently approved anti-HIV agent for AIDS. It was studied in patients who met stringent inclusion criteria and had developed AIDS within the last 120 days. Although benefit was shown only in this small subset of patients, clinical practice confirmed the efficacy of the agent (as well as its toxicity) in those who were excluded from the original study. A very effective agent was denied to needy AIDS patients by the current development format.

But even most activist groups now recognize that pure laissez-faire is not the answer. There is, as some of them have painfully learned, big money to be made ripping off desperate patients. Most activists also no longer claim that the university-pharmaceutical complex, the FDA, and the Pentagon are engaged in an unholy conspiracy to experiment on gays, Haitians, drug addicts, and other undesirables. Instead, they are applying legitimate pressure to the system, demanding to know why phase II of testing takes so long, why community-based physicians cannot work more closely with the research establishment in drug development, why several experimental drugs cannot be combined in use prior to approval, and so on. Activist pressure may increase with the release of data supporting the anti-viral properties in monkeys of CD-4, a genetically engineered AIDS drug. This agent is nearing completion of phase I testing in humans, and its path of development this year will test the FDA's handling of the process.

IT IS LIKELY that more effective therapy for AIDS will utilize different drugs in combination, working to repair both the primary damage done to the immune system by HIV and the secondary damage done to vital organs by infections and malignancies. In short, the AIDS virus calls for flexibility, creativity, and diversity in treatment approaches—all stifled by the conventional rules of drug development in the United States. What is to be done?

To succeed in restructuring the process, we must first reduce the risk of taking risks. Impartial but expert advisory panels made up of researchers, primary care physicians, and patient advocates could expeditiously assist the FDA in granting approval to promising drugs, and thus diffuse responsibility. This would also bring both the needs of the patients and the clinical acumen of the treating physicians closer to the attention of generally detached FDA reviewers.

Further, the nature of AIDS requires establishment of two tracks in drug development. One would be the current one, with strict inclusion and exclusion criteria that permit optimal scientific assessment of safety and efficacy. The second track would allow for use of the drug in patients with organ dysfunction, those receiving other experimental therapies, etc. The data from this second track would be harder to interpret but could yield some insights into the ultimate use of the agent. Essential to such a system is agreement that the drug company not be penalized in the approval process if the drug is poorly tolerated or less effective in patients in the second track.

One issue not to be overlooked is money. Who will pay for the drug, the personnel, and the equipment involved in drug administration, data monitoring, and laboratory testing? Under the current system, grants from the National Institutes of Health and/or the pharmaceutical company support the manpower and laboratory testing; the drug is provided gratis by the company. This is financially manageable with clinical studies of relatively small numbers of patients. If studies are opened widely via a second track,

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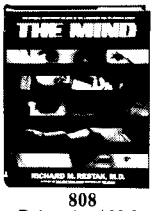

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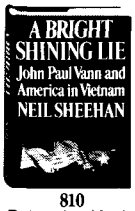

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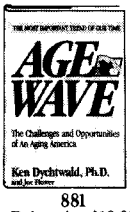

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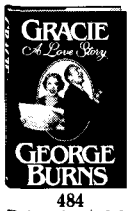

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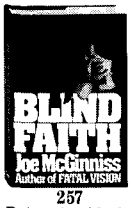

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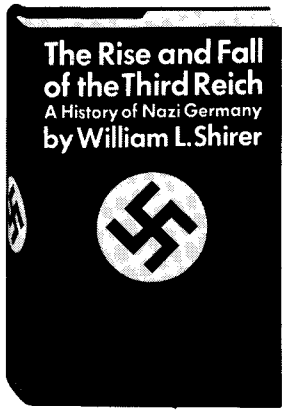

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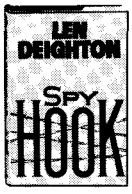

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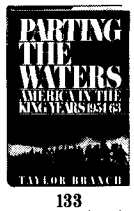

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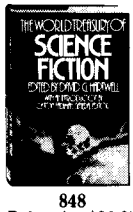

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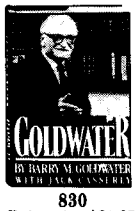

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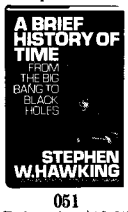

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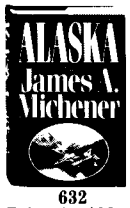

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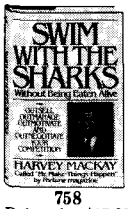

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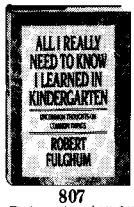

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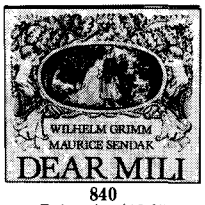

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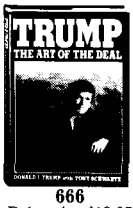

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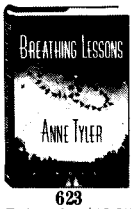

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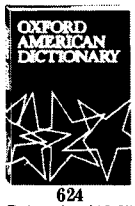

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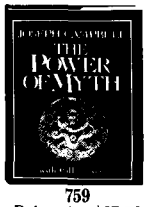

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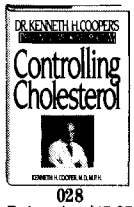

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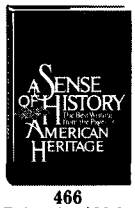

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the costs will outstrip the capacity of either government or industry. In this case, payment will have to be made by insurance carriers, Medicaid, and Medicare. The insurance industry currently pays for standard medical practice but is loath to pay for experimental therapy. This is shortsighted. Contributing to the search for an AIDS cure will ultimately save huge sums for the insurance companies, which now face decades of payment for expensive palliative care.

The committee established by the Bush administration to wrestle with these issues has a formidable task. The tone of the AIDS treatment debate thus far has been largely adversarial, with each constituency quick to blame and slow to suggest. The proper reforms will call for compromise, for a process that addresses the needs of the afflicted without forsaking the scientific method.

JEROME GROOPMAN

Jerome Groopman is an associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

The sexual revolution meets the information age.

THE DATA GAME

BY JAMES BENNET

SINGLE ADULTS in America display a remarkable tendency to multiply without being fruitful. Between 1975 and 1985, their population surged from 47 million to 68 million, a growth reflected in our popular culture, from movies about singles to advertising aimed at them. But all the favorable statistics and all the warm market attention have not changed one hard fact: you can't always get what you want. "On the one hand, you've got an increasing population of singles, and on the other, you've got diminishing ways for them to meet," said Bud Aldrich, president of the International Society of Introduction Services, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "All the rewards of modern life are for self-reliance, independence, diligence ... and there's no room in there for anyone else." He contrasted American society—with its collapsing neighborhood and family networks—with the primitive tribes of the South Pacific. "In societies like that, it was really easy to meet."

No doubt. But on the other hand, we have some things that the primitive tribes of the South Pacific lacked: telephones, personal computers with modems, FAX machines. How is it that in the middle of a communications revolution, we have such a large stock of lonely, isolated people?

Rest assured that this paradox has not escaped the attention of the invisible hand. American enterprise is doing an impressive job of harnessing information technology to romantic desperation. The deep, anxious urge to mate, stirred by the sexual revolution and then dammed by growing fear, growing workloads, and various other modern obstacles, has overflowed the traditional channels and is spilling into every available conduit.

For example, September marked the debut of Aline, the first computer-to-computer communications system to market itself broadly as a service for the lovelorn. Its newspaper advertisement features an attractive young woman with an amazed grin: "Wow! The people you can meet with your personal computer!" According to Caroline Camougis, the company's marketing and administrative director, Aline is for "anybody who has a computer and a modem ... and wants to have fun." Though you might suspect that that intersection would yield only a sliver of the population, Camougis says the service has been swamped with callers, paying 20 cents a minute and averaging 30 minutes a call.

One of them is Duster (not his real name), a New York City man with a personal computer and, until recently, a lonely heart. When he learned through an Aline ad that he could interface with women via modem, he settled on his pseudonym, limbered up his fingers, and logged-on to cruise the integrated circuits. Each night he would scan the list of users who were on-line, perhaps reading the brief profiles that some provide ("Billie: NICE BILINGUAL GIRL LOOKING FOR FRIENDS"). Then Duster would dash off a message to a female pseudonym and await the response, perhaps striking up a second conversation in the meantime. He fell into warm talks with complete strangers; often the chats became intimate, and sometimes they led to exchanged telephone numbers and dates.

In late July, Duster found "Carla." Their conversation began tritely enough:

DUSTER: Hi, Carla.

CARLA: Duster—interesting. Have we met?

But it quickly picked up:

DUSTER: Where do you like to go dancing?

CARLA: I like to dance naked in my apartment—dressed, I go where I'm taken.

DUSTER: How about my apartment? Great skyline view, pleasant company.

Now they and their computers have moved in together.

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Duster and Carla plan to wed this spring. "She liked my one-liners," he explained.

For years introduction services, such as ComQuest, a national service for gay men, have used computers as high-tech matchmakers. These machines compare lists of personal traits and put likely matches in touch with one another. But Aline and other modem-to-modem services turn the matchmaking over to the customers; users may leap into conversation with whichever strangers they choose. These talk services reverse the sexual revolution's credo of physical sharing without personal intimacy, allowing people to exchange their thoughts before exchanging anything else. The example of Duster and Carla notwithstanding, it is sometimes only after many high-minded conversations that a sexual, or even romantic, allusion creeps into the dialogue.

Still, anonymity can throw an anarchic twist into conversations. Since you will leave no tracks, you are free to be both you and me—to experiment with your personality, your sexuality, even your gender. Try logging-on to Aline with an androgynous name. You may respectfully court the gentle "Rosebud" (she likes to talk about dancing, hiking, and cats), or play a timid woman to the distant fury of "SIX INCHES AND THICK," who writes only in capital letters ("YOU'LL BE STRAPPED DOWN AND" etc.). Just don't admit to "Remi" that you're a reporter ("You picked the wrong one, sweetie. I'm a free-lance writer doing research . . .").

COMPUTER TALK comes in several forms. In most major cities, hackers can post messages for one another on bulletin board systems (BBSs), often run for free out of someone's home. Different lines cater to different interests, offering gay or heterosexual (or even asexual) talk or information services. On BBSs there may be hours or days between message and reply, so the emphasis is on careful expression, not snappy one-liners; some romantics compose elegant letters, others write poetry. But with on-line dialogue, offered by Aline and such general-purpose networks as CompuServe and American People/Link, a lag of only a few seconds separates question and response, so suitors rise or fall on the sharpness of their wit.

On CompuServe, the challenge is particularly great. This service provides a "CB simulator"—many different channels, some devoted to matchmaking, on which a number of people all talk at once (much like the party telephone lines available in many cities). Conversation scrolls down CBers' computer screens like the transcript-in-progress of a cocktail party. The result is at times bewildering, since question and answer are often separated by unrelated chatter. Somehow in this cacophony, suitors must lure the objects of their desire away from the forum to a private channel. Then the pressure is on. When a prospective mate politely announces that she is returning to the main channel, it's as humiliating as if she had excused herself to get a drink. In general, the world of computer talk is ruled by women; males seem to predominate on every system, and they close in furiously on the first female name they spot.

Camougis bills Aline as "a safe way to meet people." Fear of AIDS, she says, has chased many singles out of bars and to their keyboards. But other dangers attend getting involved with a computer paramour. The suitor who looks great on the screen may prove disappointing in person. For this reason, many computer companions are reluctant to challenge their fantasy by meeting. By the time two hackers arrange a date, however, they have often shown enough of themselves to guarantee continued friendship, if not romance. This is computer talk's great accomplishment; it enforces Mom 'n' Dad's Golden Rule of Interpersonal Relationships ("It's what's inside that counts").

For that reason, it can improve the prospects for cross-cultural, even interracial linkages. In California a black woman and a white man, living almost a hundred miles apart, met by modem, fell in love, and married. Computer lovers, freed of their bodies, float above the traditional Darwinian dating fray, where matches are often made or ruled out at a glance.

Most new matchmaking technologies are less revolutionary in their cultural implications, but they can still succeed in saving time and placing matchmaking authority in the hands of the user. Take the "976" numbers, which are proliferating across the country. Essentially telephone personal ad boards, these allow people to tape a brief message, like this one in Washington, D.C.: "Hi, I'm Karen, and I'm interested in a mistress-type relationship." We may not know much about Karen, but we know what she wants. This information can break a lot of ice.

Generally, the price of an introduction service climbs with the amount of information it stores. In D.C. the telephone service that Karen used (976-FIND) costs $2.50 a call, during which callers may either listen to 30-second messages or tape their own. Price also plays an important screening function: a high price can itself be an inducement to join the service. Barbara Tackett, owner of Meet the Elite in San Francisco, has charged as much as $25,000. In general, the more expensive services market "commitment" (protection against AIDS), "quality" (financially secure singles), "efficiency" (saves time, money, energy), and "control" (see "commitment").

THE MOST WIDESPREAD exemplar of the selective introduction service is video dating. Of the 2,000 dating services Bud Aldrich has counted around the country, he estimates that 600 use video technology. Of these, the most successful is Great Expectations. Begun 12 years ago in San Francisco by Jeffrey Ullman, an avid but basically likable self-promoter with a background in "radical politics and journalism," "G/E" now boasts 30 centers around the country, almost all of them franchises, with a total of 60,000 members. Charging between $1,200 and $1,850 for membership—which lasts until marriage—the centers will gross $35 million in 1988, according to Ullman.

G/E's promotional literature (distributed in a mass-mailing blitz that exceeds 45 million pieces annually) touts "fine quality singles" at "a time when commitment is more important than ever." Ullman points out that G/E, unlike

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some matchmakers, leaves members to determine which of those singles they will meet. "*You*—key word—*you* are the matchmaker, not G/E. You have the power." Despite the price tag, Ullman argues that G/E is a money-saver, because it spares singles lots of dead-end dating by filling them in on their potential match's background: "So when you meet—and this is a key thought as well—it's déjà vu."

THE WASHINGTON G/E CENTER, in pastel pink and gray, overlooks the Potomac River. Late one Monday morning, a few members browse silently in the "library," flipping through one-page profiles to determine whose five- to ten-minute videos they wish to see. A white man, fortyish, wearing a gray suit, leans forward in his seat as he stares at the videotape of a prim, brown-haired woman. As with most video dating services, if he likes what he sees, the center will notify the woman, who will come in and watch his tape. If she likes it, the center will send each the other's name and phone number. Sound romantic?

Reporters see only certain videos, released by the members, screened by the staff. The people are attractive and articulate; their tapes are breathtakingly dull. Off-camera, an interviewer draws from a set list of questions, giggling supportively as the members try to sell themselves.

INTERVIEWER: So how about your personality?

JULIE (young, blond, relentlessly vivacious): I have a shy streak . . . but I'm also very outgoing.

INTERVIEWER: What about your sense of humor?

RICK (gray-brown hair, strong features, earnest): Personally, I have a—a little, sometimes—a dry but witty sense of humor.

The last tape is of Val, a model with an English accent and a smile that sends her cheekbones soaring.

INTERVIEWER: So how do you feel about yourself—personally and professionally?

And so on.

A study of two G/E centers by psychologists Stanley Woll and P. Chris Cozby of California State University, Fullerton, concluded that members tend to rely on appearance and age to screen their dates; they flip through the books of profiles from back to front, since photos of members appear on the backs of the profiles. According to the study, "In their efforts to save time and effort, clients typically ignore relevant information" and "rule out a number of potential dates on the basis of relatively superficial criteria." In other words, video daters shortcut the shortcut; the same rules prevail in the video library as in the bars. Woll and Cozby deemed the service's "success rate" of ten to 15 percent "not particularly impressive." But Dr. Woll admitted, "I had a number of students who got hit on while doing research." One of them later married a man she met at G/E.

Ullman claims nearly 2,000 marriages made through his centers—including his own (see promotional literature). And it's hard to dispute the basic advantage: essentially, his service rounds up a pool of potential dates—average age 35, 74 percent university graduates, 98 percent seeking a "committed relationship"—in which singles without world enough or time for a more traditional approach may fish around. But from there on the familiar rules take over. One former member complained that while his date had looked great on videotape, which shows only the upper body, in person she turned out to be "broad as a barn door" around the waist. Evidently the written profile ("What I Like to Do," "Who I Am") and the lengthy interview had not shown him the truth, and no higher authority stepped in to set him straight. "I mean, it was like she was deformed." G/E builds a stage, assembles a troupe, and leaves them to act out the same old brutal, clumsy black comedy about mating, while paying extra for sneak previews.

DESPITE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES, in a capitalist democracy entrepreneurs will never monopolize the supply of singles. Some mavericks will always choose to take on the odds themselves, and they will remain the source of real romantic innovation. Last year Paul Hohendorf, a 33-year-old Detroit caterer, leapfrogged past the dating service complex when he began using his office FAX machine to ship a photo and information about himself to female clients, asking them to post the sheet in their offices. From 30 FAXes he sent out over a nine-month period, Hohendorf garnered one date. Then the *Chicago Sun-Times* picked up the story.

"I went home that afternoon and this machine was literally pouring the sheets out!" he said. "All these women!" Eighteen hundred, in all. "They all had one thing in common: they had a FAX machine," he noted. "They were that kind of woman." He's now planning to launch a series of parties in conjunction with RICOH Corporation, which manufactures FAX machines, under the theme "Finding the Perfect Partner for Paul."

Hohendorf managed to forge a successful marriage of romance and technology—a consummation that no dating service can achieve. By definition, an organization that brokers relationships will always go against the grain of a society that cries at *Moonstruck*. Though we might imbue high technology with almost religious authority for ordering our lives, we will forever suspect it as an intruder in romance, idealized as fundamentally spontaneous and disordering. And logic, backed by the work of Cozby and Woll, suggests that despite the support of our cleverest businessmen and most revered gadgetry, this strategic offensive does little more than slightly improve the odds of satisfying our primal need. As always, lucky ones like Duster and Carla succeed. And as always, many others—despite the intervention of computers, of telephones, of videotapes—find themselves alone with a book or a beer, nursing a highly evolved libido in an unresponsive world.

But even so, Americans are unlikely ever to desert their dating services. "Love," as Jeffrey Ullman observed, "is a hard business." And those who are bankrupt guarantee perpetual demand for new matchmakers. After all, shopworn romantic idealism—even reason bolstered by fact—stands no chance against throbbing romantic imperatives. Our hearts and our minds may say no, but our genes will keep saying yes. □

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Gorbachev spells doom for the foreign policy industry.

THE END OF INTERNATIONALISM?

BY ALAN TONELSON

THERE'S SOMETHING fishy about the American foreign policy industry's reaction to the dramatic changes in world politics in recent months. On the one hand, think-tank staffers, academics, big media journalists, and Washington hangers-on of nearly all political stripes agree that epochal change is in the air. Mikhail Gorbachev's domestic reforms and diplomatic revolution, and the waning of regional conflicts from Indochina to the Middle East, the Industry confirms, could herald nothing less than a new era in modern history. On the other hand, each of the Industry's leading ideological factions is insisting that this new era vindicates its own characteristic foreign policy prescription and shows the need to follow it in the future. Someone must be wrong.

Luminaries from the Industry's moderate-conservative center—Richard Nixon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Bush appointees Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, and analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies—see the changes as the payoff of the get-tough policies they have pushed since Nixon-era détente soured. In their view, the United States needs to keep the pressure on, and remain militarily strong, lest Soviet expansionism resume.

Neoconservatives—Jeane Kirkpatrick, Charles Krauthammer, and their soulmates at the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and *Commentary*—also feel that Western resolve has won the day and warn against allowing it to wane. But true to their insistence that the U.S.-Soviet rivalry is above all a battle of ideas, they give the credit not just to military pressure in pivotal areas, but to ideological pressures, including active propaganda campaigns and the Churchillian battle against "moral equivalence." They sense the possibility not just of containing the Soviets, but of winning complete ideological victory: the collapse of communism. So continued pressure on all fronts is critical.

The same sort of self-congratulation is seen in advice from mainstream liberal Democrats—academics Joseph Nye, Stanley Hoffmann, Seweryn Bialer, and assorted analysts at the Carnegie Endowment, along with editorial writers at the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. They perceived considerable common ground with America's adversaries well before today's Era of Good Feelings; tension between the superpowers, they believe, has long been due more to paranoia and policy rigidity than to any fundamental clash of interests. Now, finally, the paranoia and rigidity are being stripped away. So these liberal Democrats envision unprecedented progress toward their goal of a world in which the superpower competition continues, but in a civil, almost sporting manner that permits plenty of cooperation on mutual problems. They propose to "test" Gorbachev with basically the same mix of arms control plans and negotiations over regional conflicts that they've served up since Détente I disintegrated.

To the Jesse Jackson Democrats at the *Nation* and the Institute for Policy Studies, who have long regarded power politics as a pathetic anachronism and whose forerunners didn't perceive much of a Soviet threat even in Stalin's day, the official arrival of Global Spring seems to permit the United States to renounce superpower competition altogether and turn to the allegedly more urgent business that has traditionally dominated the international agenda of the far left, like promoting human rights and achieving economic justice for the Third World. According to Sherle R. Schwenninger and Jerry W. Sanders of the New York-based World Policy Institute, for example, we are now in the midst of a rapid transition from an age of geopolitics to one of "geoeconomics." Conveniently, all the things they have never liked, such as military power, are becoming obsolete. All the things they have always liked, such as "social and economic development, scientific and economic exchange, negotiation, and common planning," are emerging rapidly as the main sources of national power and influence.

All of these interpretations of today's global political upheaval can easily be written off as the kind of eloquent credit-grabbing that all major factions in the foreign policy industry have perfected. But something else seems to be at work here, too—a gnawing concern that the global activism that has marked U.S. foreign policy for 50 years, and to which each of the Industry's factions in its own way is deeply committed, is losing its raison d'être. In other words, the Industry may be worried that today's good foreign policy news could spell the end not only of the cold war, but of internationalism itself. If so, its fears are well grounded.

For all their obvious differences, the Industry's various policy prescriptions boil down to the same thing—a call for continuing an active U.S. world role, whether in the form of military assertiveness, ideological crusading, negotiation on a broad array of international issues, or massive

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Alan Tonelson is writing a book for The Twentieth Century Fund on redefining American foreign policy interests.

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foreign aid. This underlying activism stamps each of the Industry's major groupings as offshoots of internationalism, the broad, generic foreign policy approach followed by America since Pearl Harbor. What distinguishes this school of thought and unites its different branches is the so far unshakable conviction that the United States will never again know peace, security, and prosperity unless the world at large is peaceful, secure, and prosperous as well.

THIS LINK BETWEEN America's well-being and a contented world is accepted as a matter of course today. But it wasn't always so, especially before the outbreak of World War II. True, American statesmen worried about foreign threats, and particularly about some megalomaniac conquering Europe and then attacking the New World. But they handled these fears by sporadically supporting Britain's attempts to manipulate the existing conflict-ridden international system and maintain a balance of power in Europe, not by trying to purge the system of conflict itself. And once the European powers had surrendered most of their New World possessions, American statesmen and strategists generally recognized that the United States had enough latent military power to take care of its major interests without relying on diplomacy or the British navy. As long as some balance held in Europe, its endless power-politicking posed no apparent threat to U.S. foreign borrowing or to what little foreign trade there was.

American internationalism was born when Woodrow Wilson took to Versailles his warning that the nation would be drawn into war again unless world politics were not only restructured but continually regulated so as to eliminate both power politics and global injustices. "Building the peace," the first internationalists called it. The storybook history of U.S. foreign policy blames Wilson's rebuff on Americans' stupidity and selfishness. But their main reservation—the expectation that international life would soon return to its previous chaotic but altogether tolerable condition—was not unreasonable.

By the end of the 1940s, however, this expectation had clearly changed. The United States had entered into its first peace-time alliance since the 18th century, kept formidable military forces stationed around the world despite the absence of hostilities, spearheaded the creation of not only an international peace-keeping system but an international economic system as well, and was planning to plunge into the business of social engineering and nation-building in regions known to Americans primarily as exotic on-location movie sets.

Why the change? It's doubtful that Americans feared invasion or any other direct security threat; these efforts all attracted public support in a period of nuclear monopoly. Nor did U.S. prosperity require such extraordinary measures—foreign trade was still a tiny fraction of gross national product. Instead, what fueled this unheard of—for any country—burst of global activism was the rise of totalitarianism, which transformed the American perception of world politics from one of a repugnant and pointless game of nations to a life-and-death struggle moderated, in time, only by the fear of nuclear weapons. In short, totalitarianism turned what would have been called peace in other periods into a new kind of war. And the tragedies of the 1930s, the ensuing conflict with totalitarianism, and its aftermath finally convinced most Americans that, in a nuclear age, this war could only be waged by conducting a new kind of foreign policy. Thus they launched an unprecedented effort to create and nurture a sprawling community of viable, prosperous, like-minded nations strong enough to prevail in a cold war or a final showdown. There were differences over how to do this—the far left's belief that good deeds would beget allegiance, the far right's passion for raw power, etc. But all agreed on the need to do it.

TODAY, THE FOREIGN POLICY industry's internationalists seem to be saying, a totalitarian metamorphosis is under way that could warrant some adjustments in America's world role somewhere down the line, but no major departure from internationalism, no matter how favorably the Soviet Union or the rest of the world evolves. But if historic change truly is in the air, and this century's remaining political religion is losing its conflictual essence as well as its appeal, then it is difficult to see why the United States needs to continue anything like its current foreign policy.

Somehow break up the totalitarian combination of implacable hostility and great power that so drastically raised the stakes of international politics for the United States a half century ago, and America's need to do what no country had ever attempted before—actively shape and regulate an entire international order—vanishes. For without a relentless totalitarian threat to turn every peace of territory, every center of production, every mineral deposit, every market, and every transportation corridor into an actual or potential strategic asset, international politics starts to resemble the basic 19th-century pattern whose endless ups and downs the United States lived with rather easily.

As the Industry's internationalists point out, this world would still be a very turbulent and frequently violent place as long as important human needs and desires remained unsatisfied. But what security threats would the United States face from the fact of unrest or conflict abroad were there no totalitarian master plan that the outcome could advance? What reason would there be to fear a damaging disruption of international commerce? If the United States remained economically strong, how eager would any victor be to deprive America of important goods, materials, markets, or investment opportunities without a backdrop of ideological conflict or the inspiration and direction of some grand totalitarian scheme of strangulation? And, as Dimitri Simes of the Carnegie Endowment has recently asked, how long would any OPEC-like stickup succeed without an instinctively anti-American superpower looming in the background to deter a U.S. military response?

As the Industry notes, the Soviet Union would remain a great power, at the least one still possessing a nuclear

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arsenal capable of destroying America, and at the most one still harboring great international ambitions. But absent disarmament, the existential Soviet nuclear threat is—and indeed can only be—offset by a secure U.S. retaliatory capability. Only the Caspar Weinbergers of the world doubt that America still has that. And why would America's safety and welfare be threatened by the periodic muscle-flexing and even expansionism of a politically atheistic Soviet empire, one truly drained of its messianic impulses? The most prominent traditional Soviet sphere of influence, Eastern Europe, is something that the West has accepted with no major adverse consequences since 1945. In the few places where long-standing Soviet designs do threaten U.S. interests—the Persian Gulf, for example—America's needs are most reliably and efficiently dealt with by maintaining the deployable military power needed credibly to tell the Soviets "Hands Off."

A WORLD OF THIS KIND, with continuous jockeying for power and advantage by a large number of nations, ongoing social and political upheaval in the Third World, and periodic international conflict, would pose serious and perhaps intolerable problems for most countries, living as they do in crowded world neighborhoods or in the shadow of the Soviet Union, or heavily dependent on foreign commerce or raw materials. But in crucial respects, the United States isn't like most other countries. A 19th-century-style world—a multipolar world, as the Industry's new buzzword has it—would unquestionably present difficulties and threats to various American interests. But a geographically isolated, nuclear-armed, economically strong, and largely self-sufficient power could handle these threats piecemeal and unilaterally, without bothering with the difficult, exhausting business of defending and underwriting an entire free-world camp or community.

In fact, the most likely potential sources of danger from this new world that the United States does not already face would be America's Western European and Japanese allies. They seem wimpy now. But prudence could easily drive them to react to a withdrawal or substantial loosening of the U.S. security tie (and even many right-wing internationalists envision some such loosening) by building up their own nuclear arsenals to offset those of their Soviet and Chinese neighbors—no matter how benign these giants become. And even if none of the above powers harbored totalitarian ambitions, the suspicions and mistrust frequently engendered by proximity could always escalate into war and even nuclear conflicts. The Western Europeans could even turn on themselves, as they have in the past.

A regional conventional war involving groups of any of these countries would be terrible to behold, but nothing that would pose a direct, much less unmanageable, threat to a well-armed United States. Nor would the outcome be especially important—remember, there would be no fanatic totalitarians in the new world.

Obviously, the United States would not be immune if such a conflict turned nuclear. But ways of coping with this problem are conceivable that fall far short of today's internationalist formula of debilitating U.S. military expenditures on these allies' security and simultaneous toleration of flagrant trade protectionism, all for the sake of maintaining Western unity. Washington, for example, could maintain a formal security relationship with Western Europe and Japan, but greatly reduce its nuclear and conventional presences and spend the defense dividend on boosting economic competitiveness. The United States could then feel freer to exact much tougher quid pro quos for any military shield it continued to provide. Reduce U.S. alliance policy to a nuclear nonproliferation effort, and subsidizing the allies' economies looks more like welfare for the rich than enlightened self-interest.

THE UNITED STATES, then, could be sitting pretty even in a nuclear version of the 19th-century world. But internationalists would be left high and dry. Transforming American foreign policy from an adventure in building international order to a more traditional defense or promotion of discrete national interests would reduce the Atlanticist diehards and the Japanophiles at the Council on Foreign Relations, the *New York Times* editorial page, Harvard, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Carnegie Endowment to defending our currently unaffordable alliances on the grounds of friendship and common values, not security. It would also eliminate America's perceived need to compete actively with the Soviets, or anyone else, for influence in the Third World, however peacefully and civilly. The development-oriented liberals of the Overseas Development Council, the Institute for International Economics, the United Nations Association, the World Policy Institute, and the Institute for Policy Studies would be left to urge more foreign aid, trade breaks, and debt relief as a humanitarian endeavor, not as an ace in the hole against communism. By the same token, Reagan Doctrineers from the Heritage Foundation and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority would have to sell their crusade—and their individual Third World causes, such as the *contras*, Angola's UNITA, and even the Islamic zealots so prominent in the Afghan resistance—on moral rather than strategic grounds.

In addition to leaving the Industry's internationalists without a transcendent global mission, the 19th-century-like world would also deny them their chief claim to preeminence: expertise. Their foreign policy recipes could no longer be plausibly portrayed as the products of inescapable needs. Instead, they would reflect little more than emotional and psychological preferences—an attachment to Europe, a deep sympathy for the Third World, a passionate desire to spread democracy, a devotion to fair play or international law, and, perhaps, a desire to preserve the trans-Atlantic conference circuit. In a world without totalitarianism, these philosopher kings become just another pleading special interest, and internationalism becomes scarcely more than a jobs program. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Justice Collectors

Talk Radio has a theme deeper than its makers have grasped, which may be why its incessant energy seems bumptious. The subject is a radio talk show. The story was suggested by the fate of a Denver talk-show host who was murdered several years ago by neo-Nazis. Most of the film concentrates on the host's anger at the shortcomings of

Talk Radio
(Universal)

True Believer
(Columbia)

American society and on his bluntness with telephone callers. A hero lays down his life for democratic truth in this drama, or so we're asked to infer. I infer otherwise.

Eric Bogosian plays the host, as he did in the play that he wrote for himself. I didn't see it; I saw him in an earlier self-created theater piece, *Drinking in America*, which was really about Bogosian talking in America. The film is set in Dallas, and the director, Oliver Stone, works hard to incorporate the city, towering and widespread, in a story that essentially takes place in a radio studio. Stone works even harder to keep the camera mobile, to make it interesting in itself, by circling Bogosian as he sits at his microphone, by cutting in huge close-ups of mike and mouth, close-ups of red bulbs flashing—and with reflections, many reflections. Every time he shoots through the control-room window, he shows us the reflections of the people in that room watching Bogosian in the studio. All this is more febrile than exciting; it underscores, rather than relieves, Bogosian's non-stop performance.

Between fast, abrasive, smart-cracking conversations with callers, abruptly snapped off when the host chooses, the film breaks out of the studio to deal with two other story lines. One has to do with an offer of national syndication for his local show. This plot-line is fuzzed up with unclear decisions pro and con, some dull supporting actors, and Bogosian's spurious heroism about a corporate takeover of his independent show. The other plot has to do with a visit by his ex-wife, who (naturally) is still in love with him and still thinks of him as a modern titan. This limp role is played limply by Ellen Greene. At one point in the control room, when Bogosian is having trouble on the air, Greene says to the producer, "He's going down in flames." (Actually she lisps a little, which is what the line deserves.) This diction and this air of fealty to a defender of the republic are typical of the dialogue throughout.

We, too, are meant to see him going down in flames, a brave Jewish liberal combating moral and social sloth, political stupidity, racial bigotry, who is ultimately the victim of self-inflation. (In the script's most lucid moment, his boss tries to point this out to him.) He's someone who sells time to advertisers with one kind of entertainment, sizzling one-liners on serious issues, and his insistence on continuing his line of talk is ego fantasy, not bravery. He mistakes a segment of show biz for idealistic combat.

Beneath this self-deception lies a hunger—the hunger in the callers' lives for someone to like or to loathe who is actually *famous*, who is actually *on the radio* (or television, of course). This hunger courses upward to make the person in the studio feel that he is a divine dispenser. But the divinity is the process itself. This is not McLuhanism (if anyone remembers the term): the medium is only the aperture through which the many unknowns can reach toward the one who is known, the one whose views are broadcast while their views—just as good!—are closeted. And that upward reach intoxicates the person at the peak.

In *Good Morning, Vietnam* Robin Williams played an Armed Forces broadcaster who took himself so seriously that he believed his satirical broadcasts were a necessary priestly rite. At least there was some semblance of a major story that he was covering. In *Talk Radio* even that worn device isn't used; it's just full of generalized spewing, which is supposed to be a purge for the commonwealth. A sponsored purge, of course.

Bogosian does it well enough, but if you've seen him twice, you know that manic gabbling is what he does. Stone has a liking for large subjects: Latin American ferment (*Salvador*), Vietnam (*Platoon*), stock-market high-rollers (*Wall Street*). Here he has missed the point. The real subject is the talk-show host himself, not his topics or his adversaries.

Hail, Wesley Strick! I've long complained that what's wrong with most bad films is their screenplays, not their execution, from (to take current examples) *Working Girl* all the way down to *The January Man*. A new thriller, *True Believer*, is tight and entertaining, well made; but the basic reason for its success is Strick's clever screenplay.

A New York lawyer, James Woods, who wears his graying hair long and knots it in the back, specializes in defending drug peddlers. His interest is not in expediting the drug trade, although he's a pothead, but in preventing police incursions on civil rights. He says. In the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

A Cry in the Dark. For Meryl Streep collectors (like me). However, this account of a recent Australian infanticide doesn't give Streep her most helpful role. (Reviewed 12/5/88)

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels. For Michael Caine collectors (like me). Despite Steve Martin, Caine's syrup as a Riviera con man is soothing—and delightful. (1/30/89)

Pelle the Conqueror. A long, substantial chronicle of a boy's growth on a Danish farm, c. 1890. Rich texture, fine acting—especially the wondrous Max von Sydow as Pelle's father. (1/23/89)

36 Fillette. The title is a French dress size. A voluptuous 14-year-old girl's sexual adventures with an older man. Catherine Breillat, who wrote and directed, is concerned with quandaries, not exploitation. (2/6/89)

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late 1960s, before he went a bit sour on large issues, he had been involved in libertarian causes.

A fresh law school graduate, Robert Downey Jr., joins him because of his earlier reputation. Woods then takes on a case more like his earlier ones. A young Korean man has served eight years of a sentence for a murder in Chinatown, and Woods becomes convinced that he has been wrongly convicted. Woods and Downey press forward to uncover a twisted, intriguing intrigue. The twists keep arriving, credibly enough, and everything works up to a courtroom confrontation with the district attorney—in unforeseen ways.

As in even the best thrillers, *True Believer* makes obeisance to genre convention. Instance: Woods takes a beating that would put Arnold Schwarzenegger in the hospital for a week, and he is up and going a few hours later. But the dialogue is bright, the minor characters are vivid quick-sketches, and Strick has done the essential for a good thriller—he has exploited a serious issue. Woods's investigation leads into the area of legal trade-offs, allowing one crime to go unpunished in order to catch other perpetrators, and thus takes us on a fast sightseeing tour around the idea of justice.

Woods is one of those serviceable actors who are stars because the credits say so; no one ever went to a film because he was in it. In *True Believer* he gives a better-than-average Woods performance, intelligent, forceful, humorous. Downey is baby-fat likable. Margaret Colin is casually taking as a private investigator. Kurtwood Smith is highly impressive, composed and strong, as the DA. Yujo Okumoto smolders as the Korean. And every one of the others is good, too. Joseph Ruben directed, and from the first surprise pull-back after the credits, he shows a sure hand and a fast getaway. He and all the rest, I hope, know the debt they owe to Strick's screenplay.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Phèdre With Pilaf And Pekoe Tea

The Classic Stage Company under Carey Perloff's direction has rapidly positioned itself as New York's leading professional classical theater, an achievement not diminished by the fact that it's virtually the city's *only* professional classical theater. The range thus far has appeared to be international and eclectic—English (Pinter's *Birthday Party*), American-Greek (Ezra Pound's translation of *Elektra*), and French (Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*). I had the opportunity to see only the Diderot, but this was enough to convince me that Perloff's broad culture and unconventional tastes were preparing us for a potentially important theater, supplying a neglected repertory to culturally impoverished New Yorkers.

Phaedra Britannica
by Tony Harrison (after Jean Racine)
(The Classic Stage Company)

Now that I've seen *Phaedra Britannica*, I feel compelled to enter a caveat. Tony Harrison's Anglicizing of Racine's savage tragedy may have charm for English audiences, but combined with the relentless Anglicization of the production, it makes CSC momentarily look like a provincial British touring company. What we are asked to ingest is a French play populated with English characters impersonated by American actors, which is rather like eating a synthetic version of simulated meat. From the moment Thomas Theophilus (Hippolyte) enters to tell his tutor, Burleigh (Théramène), "Nyo, Nyo, I *cahnt*," we know that the merits of this production will be more phonetical than theatrical. The program credits cite a "voice and text consultant" trained at the Central School in London, who may very well be responsible for the elocutionary emphasis of the evening. Whatever the reason, the actors presently on stage at the CSC, some of them very accomplished, all sound as if they had been taught the English language by Henry Higgins.

Perloff has made it her highly laudable mission "to rediscover lesser known or rarely produced classics in new translations." But Harrison's adaptation is less a new translation than a competitive effort that uses its poetic source for prosaic analogies. English audiences have traditionally had difficulties with classical French drama. Molière, for example, is generally disliked and rarely produced, unless he can be tarted up as a Restoration wit in lace and ruffles. Harrison himself turned *Le Misanthrope* into a post-Restoration comedy for the National in 1973, transforming Célimène into a bitchy Noel Coward hostess and Alceste into a sophisticated wit indistinguishable from his foppish adversaries. Come to think of it, Michael Frayn did much the same thing to Chekhov in *Wild Honey*, making Platonov march to the clackety-clack farce rhythms of *Noises Off*. Perhaps it's time to start a society for the prevention of cruelty to Continental dramatists, before all the marrow is sucked from their bones by English adapters.

I would probably have more equanimity about this version were *Phèdre* a less powerful play and if we saw it more often. Composed by a great poet, it needs a great poet to put it into our language, and since our language is American, I wonder why the CSC didn't use the version Eric Bentley commissioned from Robert Lowell. Hardly faithful to the letter of Racine's text, that adaptation was unequaled in capturing the spirit of what Lowell called Racine's "hard electric rage." The Harrison, on the other hand, suffers from power shortages.

Set in India during the period of the British Raj, it tries to substitute Anglo-Indian relations and Hindu theology for the mythical Athenian-Minoan world Racine sifted from Euripides and Seneca. Thésée, King of Athens, becomes Governor of India; Phèdre, the lascivious Cretan, becomes his well-bred English wife; Hippolyte, the offspring of Thésée's union with an Amazon, becomes the half-caste Theophilus; the Athenian princess Aricie (Racine's invention) becomes the Indian Lilamani; and the monster who tears Hippolyte apart appears not through the intervention of Poseidon but through the Governor's appeals to Shiva. It's confusing enough to find a Hindu goddess responding to the prayers of one of the British colonials occupying her country; but by changing the nationalities of the principal characters, Harrison has totally muddled their motivations.

What is also lost in all this pukka-sahib attitudinizing is the political-sexual-mythological matrix of the play. In Racine's *Phèdre*, love is a *"funeste poison"* that turns people into monsters; *monstre*, in fact, is the operative word of

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1988

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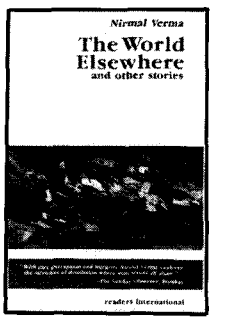

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The World Elsewhere
Nirmal Verma
India, **1987**

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Njabulo Ndebele
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1986

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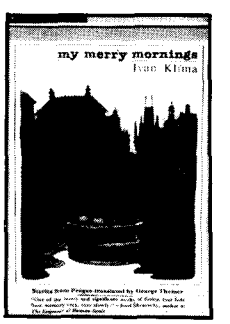

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Ivan Klima
Czech., **1985**

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the play. Thésée has vanquished the Minotaur; Hippolyte wishes to achieve *la gloire* by overcoming monsters himself; and Phèdre's family history is monstrous as well (she is related to Pasiphae and Ariadne). Phèdre has every reason to hate Hippolyte, a rival claimant for the throne. But, in Racine, public ambitions have no power before private passions, and she cannot master her adulterous, incestuous love.

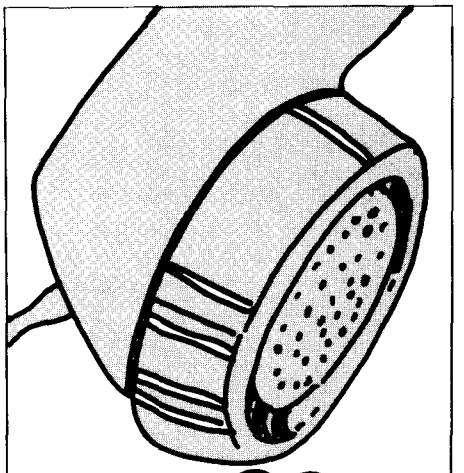
THE PLAY IS a brilliant psychological study of a lovesick woman: Phèdre is irritable, nervous, in love with death. The major obstacle is her marriage (another is Hippolyte's reputation for chastity); but when she is misinformed of Thésée's death, she is free to confess her feelings to her stepson, adding (in Lowell's words) "a worse monster threatens you than any Theseus fought and slew." Grabbing Hippolyte's weapon, she pleads in pulsing phallic imagery for "your sword's spasmodic inch." Hippolyte resists, not just out of revulsion, but because he loves Aricie, another political rival. Burning with passion, fury, and self-loathing, Phèdre's despair explodes on our ears like a cannon shot: "*Hippolyte est sensible, et ne sent rien pour moi*" (Lowell's rendering is equally powerful: "Hippolytus can feel, but not for me"). Only then does this self-characterized monster incite her husband to send a surrogate monster to kill him.

Racine displays his genius in the way he loads all the moral cards against Phèdre, yet makes her worthy of pity if not of absolution. (Legend has it that the play was written on a bet that a good poet could get crimes excused and even inspire compassion for the criminals.) Harrison's memsahib, by contrast, attracts neither pity nor interest. If Racine's Phèdre is a hot-blooded Cretan, the Governor's Wife, as played by Caroline Lagerfelt, is a sharp-featured, henna-haired, starchy English housewife with a neurotic itch for extramarital adventure. And since the play has been updated to the mid-1850s, the incest motif is no more convincing than the sensuality. One can understand the fury of the Governor, but the extreme behavior of his wife seems excessive in a moral universe where hanky-panky behind the lattices of the colonial palace is almost commonplace.

Equally disappointing is Harrison's rendering of Racine's alexandrines. In place of Racine's rhymed couplets of 12-syllable lines, Harrison substitutes couplets of iambic pentameter. These fall more gently on our ears (Lowell uses iambic couplets too), but much of Harrison's version sounds like doggerel. Instead of Lowell's compressed "I want your sword's spasmodic inch," Harrison gives us, "Get out your father's sword and thrust, thrust, thrust. / Kill the monster while it reeks of lust." (Theophilus's reply is also flat: "We've got to get away from here, we must, / I feel such nausea, such disgust.") Subordinate clauses are too often force-fed to preserve the meter: "Whatever thoughts are passing through her head, / She seems, your Excellency, almost dead." And such terms as "uncouth," "catsup," "graffiti," "stepmother aggressiveness" too often cheapen the lexicon. Occasionally Harrison manages a resonant couplet—"It lumbers, lurking, from primeval slime / Where it's been lurking, biding its own time"—but usually his rhymes would sound better set to the music of Sir Arthur Sullivan.

THEN THERE'S the Anglo-Indian setting. I recently tried to distinguish between reinterpretations of the classics based on metaphor and those based on simile: the first approach is stimulated by a poetic image at the heart of the text, the second by analogy with another time and place. *Phaedra Britannica* seems to me a typical example of the second strategy, a species popular in England and imported to this country by various Shakespeare Festivals. Usually inspired by a historical comparison—here that the conditions of ancient Greece are analogous to those of imperial India before the mutiny—such approaches depend on updating the text, along with the settings and costumes, and suggesting clever historical parallels. But simile production, being essentially cosmetic, usually only succeeds in smearing the features of the original with Max Factor pancake makeup. The presentational style of Racine's *Phèdre* needs little more than a bare stage and some extraordinary actors. *Phaedra Britannica* is buried under excess colonial baggage and unnecessary Asian paraphernalia.

Perloff's production of it suffers much the same fate. Taking place within a pseudo-Calcutta surround consisting of columns, slats, potted plants, and ubiquitous Indian servants in lots of white linen, it is a curiously static staging that might have seemed less wooden in the abstract formal world of Racine's play. But in Harrison's near-contemporary setting, the production looks stilted and action-



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less. The British strike and hold poses, as if they were having their photographs taken for the regimental yearbook, while the servants peek from behind lattices as if modeling for Indian drawings.

As for the acting, it rarely touches the savage depths of the play. Richard Riehle as Burleigh, the pipe-smoking tutor, is, well, burly, a huffing Colonel Blimp. Sakina Jaffrey as Lilamani has a sari-clad beauty that would be more fetching in motion. Rajika Puri's Ayah (Oenone) is virtually inaudible; Jack Stehlin as Theophilus seems in a perpetual daze. And although Bob Gunton brings some blistering rage to the part of the Governor, even he is eventually tamed by excessive attention to diction. Every one of these actors is capable of performing a powerful production of the play. But the artificial inflections make them sound as if they're speaking in another tongue, and it's hard to collect much emotional strength in a language so far from your own.

Reading over these comments, I realize I've been harsh toward a theater I admire. But one of the most disturbing things to me about our contemporary stage is its indiscriminate reverence for everything English. English acting can be wonderful, though its achievements are rarely seen here unless in television shows like "The Singing Detective" (Michael Gamson) and "A Very British Coup" (Ray McAnally). What we prefer to import—and to imitate—is the Mayfair gentility once thought to be banished by the Osborne revolution. Even English directors—Stephen Frears, for one—have begun to recognize that American actors have a force and passion often lacking in their more technically accomplished countrymen. That's why I am concerned over the CSC production of *Phaedra Britannica*. We don't need to repeat the mistakes of English theater. We make enough of our own.

THEY'LL TAKE THEIR STAND

A Turn in the South
V. S. Naipaul

(Knopf, 304 pp., $18.95)

The Democratic Party of the South was once known as the party of the Bourbons. Today the honor of that epithet properly belongs to the Democratic Party of the North, most notably of the Northeast and the other repositories of left-wing chatterers who learn and forget nothing. The Good Lord will forgive the left, one must suppose, for the demagoguery and the programmatic bankruptcy it displayed during the recent presidential primaries and election campaign, forgive the left its studied ignorance of, and arrogance toward, the country it improbably seeks to lead. He may, in His infinite mercy, even forgive its inability to do simple arithmetic and to learn, once and for all, that it cannot write off the South and expect the Democratic Party to recapture the White House.

It remains doubtful that the American people, who have never had much patience with stupidity, will follow the example of the Good Lord. Not even a proverbially rich sense of humor is likely to make the folks down home in Tennessee and Georgia forgive the silliness that casts Al Gore and Sam Nunn as reactionaries. What, after all, are Georgians supposed to think when they read in the left-liberal and radical press that Nunn's insensitivity to blacks renders him unfit to carry the party's banner as a candidate for the presidency or vice presidency? Black Georgians, who know Nunn well and have a well-earned reputation for political sagacity, must be especially puzzled, for they have delivered their votes to him en bloc during his senatorial campaigns. And what shall we say about Charles Robb of Virginia, who swept the black vote in his recent senatorial campaign against a black Republican? Apparently Georgia and Virginia stand in need of another Yankee invasion, preferably by radical New Yorkers experienced in the art of praxis. It seems imperative that someone teach these poor, befuddled black folks how to overcome their false consciousness.

Those who dominate the Democratic Party's absurd presidential nominating process occasionally claim to have a Southern strategy of their own. With solid black support, they propose to win the South by adding the votes of white liberals and the laboring poor, about whose innermost desires they seem to know a great deal. And it is true that in recent years some such coalition has turned back the Republican onslaught in senatorial races in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. Alas, it is also true that in each case the coalition has been led to victory by those very centrists (Robb, Shelby, Breaux, et al.) who are regarded as anathema up North. Wyche Fowler, the most leftward of the new senators, stood not a chance to win his race against a respected moderate Republican incumbent had he not enjoyed the vigorous support of Sam Nunn. But why assume that our Yankee sophisticates have ever heard of Wyche Fowler?

V. S. Naipaul might cavil at these political musings. Although he writes with a sharp eye on politics, he does so with considerable circumspection. *A Turn in the South* is largely about the community life of Southerners, white and black, high and low. A great writer and a learned, discerning, and wise man, Naipaul has written a moving book that scorns political punditry. He knows the world too well, however, to write about people in a manner isolated from the conditions of power. He has produced a book only indirectly about politics that should be required reading for those who would understand the politics (as well as the society and the culture) of the South.

Naipaul decided to limit his travels to the Southeast, from the low country to the Mississippi, though the idea for his journey came to him in Dallas, of all places, where he was observing the Republican convention of 1984. An Oxford-educated, world-traveling Trinidadian from a family with roots in India, he decided it was time to see a part of the United States other than the Northeast he knew—something few Northeasterners find it necessary to do.

From North Carolina through the lower South to Mississippi, his penetrating eye took in a great deal, as you would expect from his novels, travelogues, and historical meditations. Struck by similarities, as well as by contrasts, with the societies of the West Indies, he provides a running commentary on the legacy of slavery and emancipation, on class and ethnic tensions. For Naipaul well grasps the psychological burden carried by the descendants of slaves, much as he un-

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derstands the pain of the slaves themselves. But he grasps also the differences between the burdens and the responsibilities carried by black people who survived the torment of colonial slavery and rose to power in societies in which they are a majority, and those carried by black people who passed from slavery to segregation and racial subordination as a minority in our Southern states. Naipaul's writings about blacks in other parts of the world have sometimes been accused of meanness, even of racism; but there is no racism in his treatment of the blacks of the South, only deep curiosity and real understanding.

His wanderings took him to the homes, churches, and communities of country and small-town blacks and whites, urban grand bourgeois, rising black politicians, white industrialists, socially engaged preachers, and some celebrities. He took in Charleston and "its religion of the past"; Tallahassee and Tuskegee and their "truce with irrationality"; Jackson, "the frontier, the heartland"; Nashville and its "sanctities"; and the North Carolina not readily appreciated in that ostrich-like citadel of academe that constitutes Chapel Hill and the North Carolina "Triangle."

NAIPAUL'S CHAPTERS honor the diversity that marks the South. There is something here to warm the hearts of those for whom there are too many Souths to make any generalization right, and of those for whom the traditional South, that den of all horrors, is happily disappearing in the wake of industrialization, urbanization, integration, scalawag yuppiedom, and Yankee influx. Fortunately, there is much here to demonstrate also that the South of distinctive history, tradition, and culture is receding only slowly and unevenly—and that the stubborn qualities of a remarkable people may once again disappoint and astonish uncomprehending outsiders who, armed with statistics and the wonderful methods of the social sciences, assure us that the South is becoming just like the rest of America.

We have heard those songs many times before. We have encountered so many "new" Souths that we need a computer to catalog them. Yet the beat goes on, as George Bush, or his main man, Lee Atwater of South Carolina, understood, and Michael Dukakis, a good man fallen among Harvard technocrats, did not. The South is, in fact, changing. In some important ways, it is be-

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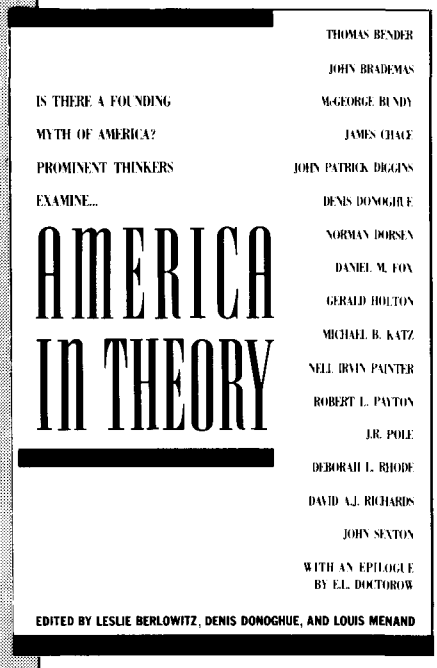

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coming more like the North. The march of consumerism, yuppies, and all the industrial-bourgeois horrors condemned by Southerners—by John Taylor of Caroline and John Randolph of Roanoke, by John C. Calhoun and George Fitzhugh, by Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and the "Agrarians," by Richard Weaver and M. E. Bradford—is proving inexorable. The delicate balance between a tough individualism that demands personal responsibility and a rootedness in community that demands Christian charity and strict respect for a consensual morality is retreating steadily before the devil-take-the-hindmost values of a marketplace mentality—not to mention the mentality of corporate bureaucracy—long despised in the South. The more important, and politically the more essential, part of the story lies in the fierce determination of the South to maintain as much continuity with the past as possible.

I HAVE NO IDEA whether Naipaul would agree with that judgment. But I do insist that he has done much to illuminate the tenacity of the Southern conservative tradition, while offering fresh insight into its historically contradictory and politically incoherent flirtation with Reaganism. For Reaganism, misconceptions aside, has little if anything to do with the kind of conservatism for which the South has always stood. The "Southern tradition," notwithstanding contrary and often admirable voices, has never been anything but conservative, but this conservatism has always been explicitly anti-market and anti-capitalist. The blacks have stood outside that tradition, obviously. But even they have done so with important exceptions, with some heavy qualifications. For it is by no means clear that a substantial number of blacks, whose economic deprivation and daily experience of racism drive them to the left, are not much closer to Southern white conservatives than to Northern liberals in their religious sensibility, and in their social attitudes toward crime, abortion, gay liberation, and much more.

Naipaul does not concern himself with Reaganism; he does no preaching on that or any other subject. Still, he does contribute mightily to our understanding of a deep and religiously grounded community, or congeries of communities, that doggedly holds to God, the family, law and order (albeit a brand of law and order that contains heavy doses of what black Southerners and others reasonably consider injustice and flagrant lawlessness), and to explosive resentment against outside interference in its affairs.

NAIPAUL LETS conservatives and liberals, whites and blacks, men and women speak for themselves, and reveal the dark side of the story in their own ways. For there is a dark side to the Southern story. We dare not sentimentalize. Whatever the beauties of community solidarity and autonomy, of that local control so dear to the hearts of the conservatives of *I'll Take My Stand* in the 1930s and of the New Leftists of the 1960s, had the federal government and national public opinion not intervened to support black liberation and the civil rights movement, blacks might well have gone down in a bloodbath, might well be suffering the indignities of segregation today.

Naipaul's interviews with blacks and whites of various social classes and political stripes explain the long-term paralysis that prevented "the better class of whites," as they often style themselves, from instituting and leading the necessary reforms before it was too late. That paralysis cost them, and the South, and the nation, dearly. For, as should have been expected, reform from without came at a high price, and the price continues to mount. Part of that price has been the damage done to the black communities themselves, as the eloquent testimony of blacks of varying experiences and viewpoints attests.

In Tallahassee, for example, Naipaul found the Rev. Bernyce Clausell on Joe Louis Street. "Tell the driver," she said on the phone, "not in the project." Good thing too, for the white cab driver might not have gone into the project, much as black postmen in Georgia recently refused to deliver mail to a drug- and crime-infected project where their lives were at risk. The Rev. Ms. Clausell, a Baptist pastor, was busy organizing a relief mission ("Tallahassee to Tunica") for the beleaguered brothers and sisters of a small town in Mississippi. She had a lot to say on a variety of subjects, including some years she had spent in New York. "We had everything all around us—reefers, murder, dope—but it didn't influence us, because of our church life." She put great store in religion, and in the place of the church in the lives of her people. "I think it comes from slavery. And even before slavery. From Africa. They had a strong religious heritage. In slavery God was their deliverer. And they felt that someday God would work it out." Was it escapism? the author inquired. For some, maybe it was, she replied. "But primarily Christianity is a way of life. I should say that the white churches I know are similar to ours. They are doing great mission work. And more than we are because they have the finances. Religion has had a great part in helping to break down segregation."

THE REV. Ms. Clausell, on the evidence presented in this book, is one of the many unsung heroines of the struggle for racial justice. Her testimony deserves to be heard and pondered. Black people face other problems besides racism: teenage pregnancies, drugs, school dropouts, hooliganism, including the hooliganism of black students who beat up other black students for doing well at school:

> We didn't have that problem when the schools were all black. Now—I hate to say it—integration has damaged some of the black children. Because in the black schools we had to visit the parents' home periodically. If we had problems we would go to the home, and the parents were very cooperative. We had religious activities at the schools. We had 15-minute morning devotions. In the integrated schools what happened was that some of the black children began to role-model some of the nonproductive white children. And parents didn't have the close tie with the schools. Those of us who are in this work have to work harder. You can't do too much in the schools now.

The specific forms and ramifications of a long-overdue integration have undermined, to some extent, solidly based (if poor and harried) black communities without putting much in their place. For many, integration has indeed been a liberation; but for many others the results remain ambiguous, disturbing, and frustrating. Social catastrophe may yet accompany political progress.

Naipaul discusses with particular sensitivity the prevalent sense among whites that integration threatened a way of life immeasurably more complex than a system of racial segregation and white domination. He documents the feeling of these whites that all religious, family, and social order was under attack by those for whom the race question, like the slavery question before it, was primarily a weapon to impose the barbarism of a godless modernity run wild. Naipaul takes that fear, which still lingers, seriously. Without conceding an

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inch to the segregationists, he guides us toward a deeper understanding of the paralysis that gripped so many decent people. In so doing, he also guides us toward an understanding of the surprising ease with which the white South made its accommodation once its short but bitter resistance proved futile.

THE MIXED results of integration look inevitable in retrospect. But the civil rights revolution in the South is hardly vitiated by its mixed results. Naipaul's interviews with educated white conservatives reveal a stubborn racism in too many of them, and a willful blindness to their own responsibilities. Natural Burkeans all, they opposed deep change out of fear that the cure would be worse than the disease (if they ever admitted, in fact, the presence of the disease); that the pressure for integration was another pretext to expand federal and bureaucratic power at the expense of community autonomy; that integration could only proceed constructively if it proceeded in step with changes in white attitudes, which could come about only slowly. Let us concede the whole litany. The question remains: What did these influential "better class of whites" do to guide their people, however slowly and carefully, toward reform?

Where and when did these people call the reigning, repugnant attitudes into question, and attempt a re-education? And without their efforts, how could anyone expect community attitudes to change at any pace at all? For such people, whose decency and honesty of purpose need not be questioned, all change looks wildly dangerous until experienced; and since they find themselves incapable of leading change, or even supporting it, they condemn themselves to suffer hard blows from those very outsiders whose agenda they distrust, often with reason. This was a lesson, after all, that Martin Luther King Jr. and a brave army of their Southern black neighbors fervently pleaded with them to learn while there was time.

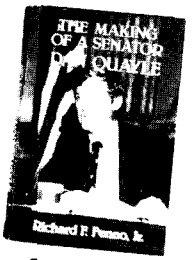
Naipaul devotes some of his finest passages to the "rednecks," a term now loosely applied to countless urban workers as well as to the poor farmers of its origin. He acknowledges that he was caught by surprise when he found much to admire in their spirit, style, and curious combination of frontier-like individualism and community loyalty. His marvelous descriptions and reflections hide no warts. Irrationality, a penchant for violence, bigotry, coarseness: all are in full view. But so is a certain nobility of character, replete with an admirable manliness and its feminine equivalent. Naipaul reads the history of the American frontier into these "rednecks," and he appreciates their "don't mess with me" mentality. For whatever their abstract views on equality, they remain fiercely committed to the equality of men within their own communities. Everything about them, from their cowboy boots and country music to their rough language to their swagger and readiness to repel any sign of disrespect, testifies to a powerful sense of themselves, of their own dignity, of their certainty that they are worth as much as any man on God's earth. That this self-esteem accompanies a willingness to defer to any authority that is perceived as legitimate complicates the matter, but it does not diminish their admirable assurance of who they are.

IT WILL COME as no surprise to knowledgeable readers, as it probably came as no surprise to Naipaul, that there are striking cultural similarities between these rough-hewn white folks and the blacks they so intensely dislike. At bottom, this is a book about genuine communities, white and black, that have been generated by a common, if often rent and violent, history. Nothing could be more obvious, for example, than the gulf that separates white and black churches and religious sensibilities, as well as attitudes toward family, work, and much else. Less obvious, but no less significant, are the elements of a shared regional culture. For example, however much businessmen and technocrats insist upon the beauties of the bourgeois work ethic and, in classical Southern fashion, root it in Scripture and in religious obligation, a fundamentally preindustrial work ethic persists among white *and* black working people: you do enough work to earn enough money to have enough leisure to enjoy life.

"Rednecks" and blacks perceive each other as shiftless and lazy, much as the solid bourgeois perceive them both. In truth, they remain closer than either cares to know to the work ethic of the old and dispossessed rural landowning classes that long dominated the South. Naipaul deftly juxtaposes conservative whites and progressive whites, and conservative blacks and progressive blacks, and reveals how "Southern" they all are in their community-rooted sensibilities and values. The depth of the religious

"I was very bored in the House. It's an awful job — especially being a Republican there. You can't get anything done."

—from



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commitment and the importance of their preachers are ubiquitous as forces alternately for harmony and discord.

A Turn in the South opens with an account of a visit to a black family in North Carolina that registers the author's strong impressions of a church service. "It was the formality—derived by these black people from so many sources—that was the surprise; and the idea of community." If I have read Naipaul correctly, he might well have written those words also about white communities, high and low. Planning his book in Dallas and New York, his mind was on the race issue. Arriving in Georgia after his initial visit to North Carolina, he shifted his concerns. "I didn't know then that that issue would quickly work itself out during the journey and that my subject would become another South—of order and faith, and music and melancholy—which I didn't know about, but of which I had been given an intimation in Dallas." In Mississippi he found once more "that idea of a small community, where everyone knew everyone else and people were related—I had found that for many people, it was part of the beauty of the ways of the past."

YET *A Turn in the South* does not slip into sentimentality. It records the disintegration of communities in the wake of industrialization, high-tech, urbanization, and yes, racial integration. Naipaul does not seem sanguine about the prospects of maintaining strong communities against the onslaught of a modernization that the South has historically resisted, more often than not in ways that have proved tragic. Yet he also displays a gnawing suspicion that these people, black and white, who are having their world(s) cut out from under them, are a tough breed; that if any people can re-create essentially rural and small-town communities in steadily enlarging cities, they can.

As I read this fascinating and revealing book, I recalled the indispensable studies of John Shelton Reed, the gifted and politically conservative sociologist, on the staying power of traditional Southern attitudes and folkways. And I could not help hearing, in the white and black voices recorded by Naipaul, echoes of outstanding Southern conservative writers such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Richard Weaver. Ransom, Tate, and their fellow Agrarians, and Weaver and others after them, did their best to explain the unique combination of frontier-like individualism and community conformity, of a boldly democratic spirit and a distrust of egalitarian ideological abstractions, of a deep-seated "older religiousness," as Weaver called it, rooted in a fundamentalism that stood upon the Word and a healthy toleration for diverse interpretations of the Spirit. They viewed the creeping dissolution of their beloved communities with alarm, but they never lost sight of their perdurability.

The penetrating work of these reactionary no-'counts goes largely unread in our universities and among liberals and leftists, who keep making the same ghastly errors in political judgment. Yet even they may get the point if they read Naipaul's book. Since Naipaul is a luminary of the trans-Atlantic literary world, they may feel compelled to read it. I suspect that he would appreciate the joke.

EUGENE D. GENOVESE

Eugene D. Genovese is currently a visiting distinguished professor of humanities and history at the College of William and Mary.

MASTER OF CHAOS

Chinese Story and Other Tales by Boris Pilnyak translated with an introduction by Vera T. Reck and Michael Green

(University of Oklahoma Press, 288 pp., $24.95)

There are writers who submit themselves to the demands of their historical moment. They disdain aesthetic proprieties, they scorn posterity. They plunge into the confusions of their time and then must pay this price: that when a new moment comes along, they will suffer neglect. Such a writer was Boris Pilnyak (1894-1938?), who did his finest work during the 1920s, when Russian literature blazed with talent and innovation.

Though some of Pilnyak's fictions have been translated into English, he has never enjoyed in America the literary reputation that his contemporary Isaac Babel has. Of the two writers, Babel is the more finished, with a tonality unmistakably his own, but Pilnyak is at once bolder and more chaotic, reaching out toward a greater range of verbal effects and narrative modes. No matter; both, at their best, are wonderful.

About himself, Pilnyak wrote:

> My true name is Vogau. My father—a country veterinarian—comes from German settlers of the Volga region; and my mother from an ancient, now extinguished family of Saratov merchants. . . . Both father and mother were close to the Populists of the 1880s and 1890s. On my paternal side I had German and a tiny bit of Jewish blood in my veins, on my maternal side, Slavic and Mongolian (Tartar). I spent my childhood in the provincial towns of the Moscow region. . . . I started writing at the age of 9.

Historians of Russian literature agree that a major influence upon Pilnyak's work was the Symbolism of Andrei Bely. Vera Reck and Michael Green, the editors of this new selection of Pilnyak stories, cite as instances: "a loose musical structure, abrupt narrative turns, incantatory digressions . . . obsessive wordplay . . . and experiments with typographical layout." The structural devices they mention are easy to detect; but for a reader without Russian, the verbal elements must be taken on faith. What does seem unmistakable, however, is the extent to which the modernist Pilnyak draws upon the classics of Russian prose, especially Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and Leskov.

I am familiar with two of Pilnyak's novels in English. *The Naked Year* (1922) is aggressively experimental, and now suffers from the fact that few things in literature date more than the bold experiment of yesterday. *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea* (1930) is a shifty, nervous mixture of Pilnyak's strong narrative gift with a feeble effort to placate Stalin's commissars. But some of his best work has been translated in three collec-

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tions of stories, two of them published in the late 1960s and now in this edition by Reck and Green.

As a writer Pilnyak had a fine gift for getting into trouble. His eye for social and moral fissures led him to themes of danger. As a man, he seems to have been rather timorous, again and again recanting the "heresies" that his imagination could not resist. At least two of his stories from the 1920s, chafing Bolshevik arrogance and depicting Stalin as a murderer, constitute a death warrant. In 1937 Pilnyak was arrested, charged with Trotskyism and spying for Japan (he was a friend of Karl Radek, a Communist leader who briefly sided with Trotsky, and he had indeed traveled widely in the Orient). There is no authoritative account of how Pilnyak died, but it is generally supposed that he was killed in a Moscow prison in 1938.

CHAOS is Pilnyak's great subject. Each of his stories can seem entirely different in theme, method, and style from the others—apparently this is a writer of uncentered desires. Yet beneath the many varieties of surface, there is a unifying motif: that rush of energy that proceeds from the cataclysm of modern Russian history. Where the Bolsheviks saw Russia through the prism of revolution, Pilnyak saw the Revolution through the prism of Russian history. In his best stories, past hurtles into the future, future wavers before the past, sleepy Russian provinces serve as theater for historical violence, Bolshevism dons a peasant costume. Everything becomes mixed up, unsettled, yet in the sharply outlined figures that race in and out of his stories there is a power of will, a sense of living at history's edge, which has been set loose by the revolution that Pilnyak both accepts and takes to be sullied from its inception.

Not in command of a coherent ideology, Pilnyak exposed himself guilelessly to the ideologies swirling across Russia in the years before Stalin shut everything down—exposed himself *as a writer*, with his eyes, nose, ears. His work quivers with the excitement, but also the utter weariness, of living in a revolutionary moment, or more accurately, in a moment when the revolution half-consumed itself.

There are two serious problems with this kind of writing. The first is that the chaos depicted with graphic intensity can overwhelm the act of depiction, leading to a work that is morally opaque or neuter, a mere reflex of the spirit of the time; but in his short fictions Pilnyak avoids this trap through a canny orchestration of voices that results in a distancing of judgment and point of view. The narrator and most of the characters, having no choice, submit to the chaos of their moment, but except perhaps in *The Naked Year*, Pilnyak neither exalts nor sensationalizes the chaos. A wanton subject matter is controlled through an austerity of literary means. The other, linked danger is that in creating a verbal surface that reflects the incoherence of the time he is depicting, Pilnyak will be unable to maintain sufficient control and will lapse into extravagant language. This he avoids most (though not all) of the time, through abrupt cuttings and sharp closures.

Pilnyak felt there were "constants of human nature," elemental drives of violence and aggression; at times he wrote like what we'd now call a social Darwinist. There is a dazzling story, "Over the Ravine" (1915), printed in an earlier collection, which depicts a "community" of birds in which the leader loses his potency and must give way to a healthy young rival—here natural ruthlessness yields a kind of poetry. But in other stories Pilnyak can melt into an almost Chekhovian tenderness.

As a writer he begins in a modernist vein: style racing, narrative broken with jagged intercuttings, characterization flatly anti-psychological, text punctuated with Dos Passos-like newspaper clippings, legal documents, Party edicts. Long before current literary theory, Pilnyak had committed himself to the "conventionality" of art, striving not for a 19th-century transparency of realism but for the text as impasto, a primary substance between subject and reader. In his thought, however, this modernist was still a creature of 19th-century Russia, loving the traditional objects and places of his native land in a Leskovian way, and adhering to a belated Slavophile outlook that made him suspicious of the West. A streak of peasant anarchism, truculent before all urban phenomena, breaks into his work. (But where does his modernist technique come from, if not the city?)

"I am not a Communist," he wrote in 1924, "and so I do not acknowledge that I ought to . . . write like a Communist. I do acknowledge that Communist power in Russia was brought about by the historical destiny of Russia." The Bolshevik revolution is here transfigured into a primitive jacquerie, guided or misguided by an urban vanguard, and this seems quite in accord with the shrewd distinction made intuitively by the Russian peasants, both in reality and in literature, between Bolsheviks who gave them land and Communists who took it back. For Pilnyak, observed the literary historian Mark Slonim, "The wild primitivism of revolutionary excesses was simply an outburst of national energies." Half a century ago such a notion would have seemed bizarre; today, after decades of Stalinism, perhaps not.

The Russian poet Alexander Blok once said that he carried chaos within him all his life. As a writer Pilnyak lived by the same norm, almost as if to give imaginative body to Trotsky's "law of combined development," according to which historical change in a backward country brings together, often in an intolerable friction, clashing centuries and ways of life. In his *Literature and Revolution* (1924) Trotsky has a keen, though finally dogmatic, portrayal of Pilnyak's work:

> Pilnyak takes the Revolution in its periphery, in its back yards, in the village, and mainly in the provincial towns. His Revolution is a small-town one. . . . A vital part of [it] is grasped with a keen eye, but as if in a hurry, as if rushing past. . . . The mean-

ORTHODONTIA

You see them everywhere, the grinning martyrs,
mere children most of them, though some
are women grown, with matching breasts, their teeth
tight-bound in silver and pried by tinsel bands
whose tensile strength does something to the eyes—
adds a fanatic gleam. What will the ages
not of our faith make of this glad torture?
The Iroquois and Aztecs had their games
and obsidian knives, and the blue Tuareg
sport stony scarifications, but nothing
owns quite the scope of all these chastised mouths
shining on streets and in schoolyards like stars.
To what end? Lips whose curves can barely cling
to parallel perfections that look false.

JOHN UPDIKE

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> ingless dreary life of the filthy provincial philistine perishing in the midst of the Revolution, the prosaic senseless routine of everyday Soviet life, and all this in the midst of the October storm, is painted by Pilnyak . . . as a series of bright spots. . . . The general impression is always the same—a restless dualism.

But Trotsky spoils his picture by asking that Pilnyak reach a synthesis, not realizing that he is thereby proposing artistic suicide: for the power of a writer like Pilnyak resides precisely in his enchantment with contradiction and chaos, his refusal of premature or perhaps any sort of historical synthesis. The synthesis in Pilnyak's work, if there is one, lies in the form of his stories, as it orders the disorder of the material. Reading him we need a measure of historical imagination—the capacity to imagine a moment radically different from our own, a moment when the Bolshevik Revolution was able to arouse the most passionate responses among writers, indeed, among serious people of all kinds.

ALMOST EVERY piece in *Chinese Story and Other Tales* merits attention, but I will focus on three that seem to me of major interest.

"Mother Earth" (1924), harsh in matter but lyrical in tone, is a novella set during the civil war in a remote Volga region. Red and White armies battle in the distance, but here in the depths of old Russia the peasants remain ignorant and indifferent, rutted in ancient rites and superstitions. Nekulyev, a forester who is also an idealistic Bolshevik, has been sent to protect the local forest from peasant raids, and what follows are violent clashes in which this relatively cultivated man experiences the fright of living in an utterly alien world. Nekulyev writes in a letter:

> I live like Robinson Crusoe; I sleep without sheets, eat raw eggs and milk—nothing cooked—and go about half-naked. All around me there is savagery, shame, abomination . . .
>
> I don't understand our peasants' conception of honor—after all, they must have honor. They live understanding nothing, nothing at all—and here is Yegor building a new house according to all the soothsayers' rules at a time when the world revolution is taking place!

Neatly crafted, as an interplay of narrative voices that move at sharply different tempos, "Mother Earth" is perhaps Pilnyak's signature piece, unresolved in its counterposition of Yegor and world revolution, peasant and Bolsheviks, unresolved as art must often be.

"THE TALE OF the Unextinguished Moon" (1926) is a shorter piece, based on an actual event, and it can still strike terror in the heart. In the fall of 1925, Mikhail Frunze, People's Commissar of the Army and Navy, died after an operation in Moscow, which, according to widespread rumor, had been ordered by Stalin in order to dispose of a dangerous rival. In May 1926 Pilnyak printed a story about this incident in the magazine *Novy Mir*, with only the slightest effort to disguise its reference to the Frunze affair. In this story "the Unbending Man," clearly a facsimile of Stalin, is shown as a heartless, paranoid dictator, while the simple, decent victim, Gavrilov, bears a close resemblance to Frunze.

How Pilnyak, who by then had already experienced the bitterness of political gang-ups, could have permitted himself to write this story, and how *Novy Mir* could have risked printing it, I do not understand. Perhaps the explanation is that in 1926 the full wrath of "the Unbending Man" had not yet been felt. In any case, the issue of *Novy Mir* was quickly withdrawn and Pilnyak confessed to "the grossest of errors." Twenty years ago, Reck and Green published a volume of Pilnyak in which an incomplete and faulty version of this story appeared, but since then they have come up with a rare copy of the offending issue of *Novy Mir* and retranslated it—with shattering effect.

The story itself is a marvel of narrative, without a speck of rhetoric; everything moves gravely to a fatal conclusion, trusting entirely to the sheer force of events. Perhaps the most terrible aspect is not so much the behavior of "the Unbending Man," but the good faith with which Gavrilov-Frunze accedes to the death he knows to be in store for him, which he accepts because he is a Party man disciplined to obey. Pilnyak does not add a word of comment.

The novella "Mahogany" (1929) has been described as the last piece of authentic Pilnyak. It is a glory of Russian literature, in which Pilnyak, with greater subtlety and richer humor than in his earlier work, again pits the past against the present, Russia against its revolutionaries. The story is set in a drab provincial town and told through a series of staccato narrative "takes," with characters making cameo appearances, so that the total effect is not so much a rendering of individuals as a comprehensive picture of social disintegration.

TRADITIONAL Russian literature makes its presence felt throughout "Mahogany." The brothers Bezdetov, scavengers in quest of old furniture that they resell in Moscow at great profit, recall Gogol's *Dead Souls;* dialogue and comment about the barbarous destruction of church bells by local Party bosses hark back to Leskov. Medieval sloth is set off against Bolshevik will; old Yakov, who sees nothing but sameness and repetition in history, against his brother Ivan, "a Communist of 1919," who mourns the decline of the revolution and whose big-city son, briefly thrust into the narrative, is a follower of Trotsky. Perhaps the most striking part of "Mahogany" is the recurrent appearance of a group of political outcasts, old Leninists, who live in a pit near a brick kiln:

> these people who had brought time to a standstill in the era of war communism. . . . Here slept . . . men of arrested ideas, madmen and drunkards, men who . . . had created a strict fraternity, a strict communism, having nothing of their own, neither money nor possessions nor wives; their wives had left them, had left their dreams, their madness, their alcohol. In the cave it was very close, very warm, very bare.

With sweeping references Pilnyak compares these "fool[s] of Soviet Russia for Justice's sake" with the "fools of Holy Russia for Christ's sake." Anyone at all familiar with 19th-century Russian literature will immediately think of the role the Old Believers play there, of those outcasts of history mourning a lost purity.

The denunciations and recantations that followed "Mahogany" can readily be imagined. Pilnyak dismantled the story to insert a weakened version into his novel *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea*, but by the 1930s, when "the Unbending Man" had achieved total power, no efforts to chant the formulas of "socialist realism" could save him. He had shown too much of reality, and he paid with his life.

IRVING HOWE

Irving Howe is working on a book about the novel titled *Selected Short Subjects*.

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BEFORE THE FALL

The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905

by Aaron L. Friedberg

(Princeton University Press, 329 pp., $29.95)

The Great Power is in trouble. A costly intervention in the Third World has disrupted its economy and created doubts about its ability to fulfill its international commitments. Military superiority has been lost. Its most powerful rival, the world's largest land power, now has a significant naval force. The Great Power's economic and industrial capacity, which was in a class by itself 40 years ago, is eroding; imports are soaring, and calls for protectionism are rising. It calls for its friends to share its burdens, but to little avail. Money is needed to repair the domestic social fabric, but nobody can decide where to get the funds. It is not easy to be the top nation in a period of relative decline.

Does this fable describe Britain at the beginning of this century or the United States near its end? Both, says Paul Kennedy; and the op-ed pages are filled with figures supporting and disputing his thesis. Four decades ago the United States accounted for some 40 percent of world product; today, for 23 percent. In 1986 the American share of world exports was 11 percent, down from 17 percent in 1950. Our share of world monetary reserves dropped even more dramatically, from 50 percent to nine percent.

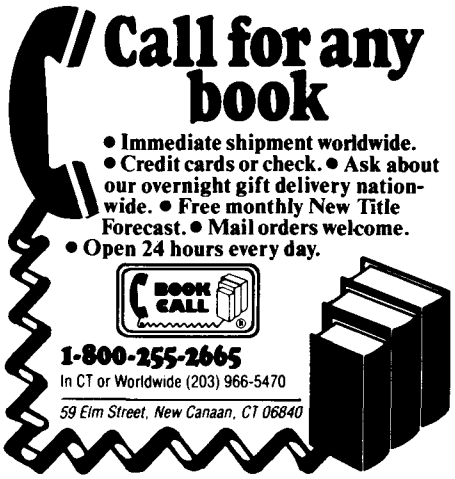
Others maintain that 1950 is a grossly atypical base for comparison, since all the major industrial countries except the United States were then recovering from the devastation of World War II. If one takes, instead, the pre-war period or the mid-1970s as a base, the American share of world product is constant at about 23 percent, rather than continuing to decline. Kennedy has remarked on the irony of American conservatives echoing the arguments of conservatives in Edwardian Britain who resisted their own debate on decline.

How would we know a decline if we met one? Figures can be used selectively. As Brooks Adams observed at the turn of the century, "The chief value of statistics lies in their aptitude to explain accepted facts." He was commenting on Sir Robert Giffen's official view that the British trade deficit signified rising opulence. Earlier, Adams's brother Henry had written that the Board of Trade figures for 1898 "at last [settle] the fact that British industry is quite ruined and that its decline has at last become a debacle." Brooks concluded that all signs pointed to imminent American supremacy.

Predictions of Britain's decline were not new at the end of the century. Pessimists about Britain's future after the loss of the American colonies failed to foresee the Victorian era. In 1865, at the height of Britain's ascendancy, Matthew Arnold saw "an imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways, declining into a sort of greater Holland." In 1879 Gladstone expected the United States to "wrest from us our commercial supremacy." America also has a long history of premature predictions of decline. So how do we know when we are in a real decline?

Some help comes from Aaron Friedberg's fascinating book, and it does not necessarily support Kennedy's argument. Friedberg is cautious about comparisons with the current American predicament, and his political science "model" is too little developed to contribute to theoretical generalization. But his central conclusion is compelling: when measuring power, perceptions matter. Moreover, a consensus on perceptions of changing power is not easy for a liberal democracy. The strength of Friedberg's book is his well-researched reconstruction of the British governmental debate on decline at the turn of the century. Friedberg would have been wise also to have looked more broadly at society and the debate over education, but his account of the debate at the level of government is meticulously done.

Friedberg demonstrates that the problem was less complacency (there was widespread concern about decline) than intellectual fragmentation: there was too little agreement about the useful measures or the appropriate responses. Friedberg argues that some change in Britain's position was inevitable. Her resources would not permit a return to pri-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macy after 1900. Still, he believes that more could have been done to preserve Britain's position and to prepare for coming challenges. Like Correlli Bannett in *The Collapse of British Power*, Friedberg warns against playing the role of a world power without being willing to pay for the privilege.

FRIEDBERG shows that the Conservatives believed that Britain was financially stretched to its limit, and feared the economic effects of raising income taxes. They failed to invest in the forces needed to maintain global naval supremacy, and disguised that fact from the public by keeping the same slogans. Thus the empire became dependent on the good will of the new regional powers, America and Japan. As Barnett argues, that transformed the empire from a source of strength into a source of weakness: henceforth Britain had to avoid embroilment with more than one power in more than one region at a time. On the other hand, Britain refused to implement conscription (as other major European powers had done since 1871), or to pay for an adequate army to help maintain the balance on the Continent in a new age of rail mobilization. The 1906 plan for 120,000 troops to assist France proved woefully inadequate in 1914.

On the economic and social front, Britain failed to invest in the latest technology in such critical new industries as chemicals, electricity, or precision engineering. Until 1902 Britain had no public secondary school system, despite widespread knowledge of German educational superiority. There were seven universities in Britain, compared with 22 in Germany and some 700 assorted colleges and technical schools in the United States. Moreover, the increasing economic importance of overseas investment was transforming Britain into a rentier society, which lived off returns from exported savings. Friedberg does not discuss the transformation of British capitalism and the way that financial interests prevailed over industrial ones, nor the effects of direct overseas investment on the domestic political debate. Some economists argue, however, that the dominance of financial interests sustained an overvalued currency that was detrimental to the interests of British industry.

Friedberg recounts how Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain tried to rouse his Conservative colleagues to a more coherent response. But he argues that Chamberlain's protectionist schemes might have made things worse; and in any event, they wound up splitting his party. Chamberlain was no more successful in the security area. At a colonial conference in 1902, he failed to persuade the colonies to share the burden of naval costs. (His argument that "the Weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of its fate" gave Friedberg the title of his book.)

Nor could Chamberlain convince his colleagues that Britain's burdens were relatively light. In fact, the entire government budget (of which defense was a little over a third) was only 15 percent of GNP (contrasted with nearly 50 percent in Thatcher's Britain). Although the Boer War created a deficit from 1899 to 1903, the budget was in surplus thereafter; the national debt in 1907 was not much higher than it had been in the 1880s. Why, then, did Britain decide it could not afford to maintain naval supremacy, or an adequate Continental expeditionary force? In large part, because the prevailing economic orthodoxy believed in the negative effects of government spending, and particularly opposed raising income taxes.

BY NOW the analogy with the contemporary American debate should be plain. Those who argue for retrenchment in our foreign policy maintain that we can no longer afford alliance commitments undertaken in an earlier era. If the allies don't pick up part of the burden (as we define the burden), we should cut back. We are suffering, supposedly, from "imperial overstretch." In fact, the numbers go the wrong way for the theorists of overstretch. Defense as a share of GNP has declined rather than risen, from ten percent in the 1950s to six percent today. The defense burden is no more onerous in relation to our share of world product than it was before. If supply-side conservatives had been willing to raise taxes, the Reagan years could have seen a higher level of both guns and butter. Instead, Reagan practiced global power on the cheap. Giving away the tax base in 1981 led to the twin deficits (fiscal and trade), the erosion of industry, and our transformation into a net debtor. Meanwhile the American debate on trade has been heavily skewed by ideological slogans about protectionism. And the analysis of the security implications of the sectoral composition of trade has been poor.

Déjà vu? Kennedy argues that "our overcommitments in foreign policy can be reduced" by doing "many things Great Britain did in the post-1900 era when it had a crisis of massive overextension during the Boer War." But if the historical analogy is wrong, and the United States is not overcommitted, false anxieties might prompt Americans to adopt policies of retrenchment that, ironically, could contribute to precisely the decline they are supposed to forestall. Withdrawal from international commitments could reduce American influence in world politics without necessarily strengthening the domestic economy. Friedberg argues that shifts in power resources often fail to have an impact until they are perceived. He does not broach the converse proposition: that mistakenly perceived decline can fulfill itself.

THERE ARE at least three reasons to be wary about the analogy between Britain and America. The first, which was already apparent to Tocqueville, Gladstone, and Chamberlain, concerns the question of scale. Britain, an island the size of a middling American state, ruled a quarter of the world. It was overstretched unless it could unify the empire. In 1914 London declared war on Germany on behalf of the entire empire. But the empire quickly fell victim to the solvent of nationalism. By 1926 the Commonwealth had ceased to be regarded as a reliable basis for British military plans.

At least since 1865, by contrast, the United States has been a single, continental-scale economy immune to nationalist disintegration. Today its imports account for only 12 percent of GNP, in comparison with a British figure of 25 percent in 1914. Even at the peak of its powers in 1870s, Britain had only the third largest economy in the world, and it fell to fourth place by 1914. But America still has the world's largest GNP. These differences of scale must be kept in mind when making analogies about overstretch.

Second, for all the loose talk (and looser definition) of an American empire, there are important differences between Britain's territorial empire and America's areas of influence. Americans have more choices about types and levels of defense commitments than Britain. There are more degrees of freedom for America to withdraw protection and for our allies to request its withdrawal. American trade is not as drawn to protected colonial markets. As Patrick O'Brien has shown, Hobson, the turn-of-the-century British

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theorist, was right that territorial empire was a net drain on Britain.

Whether one looks at NATO as a forward defense of American borders in which Europeans provide 90 percent of the manpower, or as an act of American generosity, it is hard to see our alliances constituting a comparable burden, particularly since the withdrawal of American troops to home bases would not save money unless the troops were disbanded. Unlike Edwardian Britain, which had to leave its isolation and cast about for allies at the beginning of the century, the task for the United States at the end of the century is to maintain the successful alliances with the great industrial democracies that have been so critical to the global balance of power for the past 40 years.

A THIRD DIFFERENCE lies in the geopolitical challenges that the two nations face. In 1900 Britain faced rising contenders in Germany, the United States, and Russia. The nearest of those contenders, Germany, not only surpassed Britain in economic strength, it was also becoming militarily dominant on the European continent and a threat to Britain's supremacy. America's external situation today is very different. Its principal military adversary is the power suffering from imperial overstretch. Not only does the Soviet Union dominate an unstable Eastern European empire, but its economy has suffered a serious deceleration of the growth rates that were once the enabling condition for Soviet expansionism. In addition, Soviet defense is estimated to be at least 15 percent of GNP; and some estimates place the costs of defense and empire at more than 20 percent of GNP—some three times higher than the relative burden on the American economy. The proper analogy to the British predicament would be to imagine Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany not passing Britain in economic and military strength, but declining, and searching for a breathing spell from its military buildup.

It is difficult to conclude that any of the other major world powers identified by George Kennan four decades ago are now overtaking the United States in military or economic power. Although Western Europe has a skilled population and the Common Market coming in 1992, few observers think that European integration will progress soon to a single government or a single security policy. Without the political unity for a powerful defense or political role in the world, Western Europe lacks the cohesion required for a great-power role. Similarly, China is a potential rival of the United States only over a much longer term. Chinese economic growth has maintained the high annual rate of nearly nine percent for much of the '80s, and Beijing possesses a growing force of nuclear weapons. But China's human and technological infrastructure is much less developed than that of the United States or even the Soviet Union.

Of course, there is Japan. More and more Americans believe that Japanese economic strength is a greater challenge than Soviet military power. But economic competition is not a zero-sum game where one country's gain is its competitor's loss. Japan's strategy is to be a trading state rather than a military power. In this role, Japanese growth not only challenges the United States, it also benefits the United States with greater choice for American consumers, and with competition that keeps American industry on its toes. Nor is Japan politically or culturally prepared to challenge the United States for global pre-eminence.

THE MORE interesting comparisons lie in the domestic domain. Here there are legitimate causes for concern. Productivity growth in the American economy has fallen to an annual rate of 1.4 percent, from its 2.7 percent average annual rate in the first two postwar decades. Personal savings are at an all-time low of two percent, and gross investment at 17 percent of GNP is nearly half the Japanese level of 30 percent. Civilian R&D has been at 1.8 percent of GNP for two decades, while it has increased to 2.8 and 2.6 percent in Germany and Japan, respectively. Foreign investors accounted for almost half of American patents in 1987, compared with one-third a decade earlier. American science students ranked 14th out of 17 countries surveyed in 1988. One-fifth of America's engineers are foreign born. A quarter of our high school students drop out.

And yet even here we must be wary of glib comparisons with Britain. Average British productivity increases in the 40 years after 1900 were only 0.4 percent. While financial interests have grown at the expense of manufacturing, the dollar has not been as consistently overvalued as was the pound (major dollar devaluations occurred in the early '70s and mid-'80s). While Britain fell behind in leading sectors of chemicals, electricity, and precision engineering at the turn of the century, the United States remains among the top countries in critical new sectors such as information processing and biotechnology. Moreover, although much needs to be done about education in America, this country is in infinitely better shape than Britain was at the beginning of the century. And while emigration drained talented Britons from the homeland, immigration continually infuses the United States with new labor and energy. Few societies are so open that they are able to cope with shortages of talent by importing it and absorbing it as this country does.

Perhaps the most interesting domestic comparison, however, is political. Even if the United States has the resources to cope with its international commitments and its need for domestic reforms, will it? Here the British experience suggests skepticism. Friedberg stresses that the political processes of liberal democracy tend to splinter and divert the national debate. He speculates that centralized countries may have a better chance of coordinating a response to early inklings of relative decline than liberal democracies.

But beware once again. In a footnote, Friedberg cites Kennedy's view that in 1900 Britain's competitors were behind Britain in efforts to integrate national assessments. Friedberg himself notes that it was the fear of decline in Wilhelm's Germany that helped to precipitate the war that A. J. P. Taylor says deprived Germany of what would otherwise have been its natural rise to hegemony over Europe. And Brezhnev's Soviet Union seems to belie Friedberg's speculation about the advantages of centralization for coordinating a response to decline. Even in politics, then, the jury is still out. Beware of historians bearing fancy analogies.

JOSEPH S. NYE JR.

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HOPELESSLY IN LOVE

The High Road
by Edna O'Brien

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 188 pp., $18.95)

There has always been a relentless fatality about Edna O'Brien's literary imagination. Whether she is vividly recapturing the persons and places of her impoverished Irish childhood or brooding on the anguish of a woman whose lover has gone for good, the disheartening message is clear: life doesn't turn out at all well. In her early novels she could be impudently funny about all the awkward fumbling that sex exacts, and her prose can soar with lyrical delight in the stark beauty of her native land, but we are never allowed to forget that the prospect of happiness is a cruel delusion. Life is a gaffer, as Mary Hanrahan puts it in O'Brien's novel *Night* (1973), a bog of drudgery, disappointment, and pain, especially for "the strange, throttled, sacrificial women" of Ireland.

In the three intertwined novels that Edna O'Brien published at the start of her career in the early 1960s—they were reissued as *The Country Girls Trilogy* in 1986—the two young heroines chafe at the priest-ridden and stifling narrowness of their rural world in the west of Ireland, and long to escape to the bright lights of Dublin. Kate, romantic and rosy with innocent expectations, learns all too soon how unalterably sour adult reality can be. Baba, whose high-spirited, brash, and mocking disposition is the opposite of Kate's, hoots contemptuously at her friend's yearning for love, and believes herself to be tough and invulnerable because she has her eye fixed on the main chance and has a witty knack for down-to-earth scorn ("It's not the vote women need, we should be armed"). But there is no wedded bliss in store for either country girl after they've escaped to the big city. Though Baba marries for money and Kate (or so she calamitously believes) for love, they both find nothing but despair at the end of the tunnel bringing them from girlhood to middle age.

What went wrong? O'Brien strongly suggests that it was not just their choice of brutally unsuitable and heartless men that robbed them of happiness, but the intransigence of their girlish illusions that set their disastrous fate in motion. This knot of hopelessness takes different, sometimes acutely moving, forms in the short stories that O'Brien wrote with prolific abundance after *The Country Girls*. Whether she was dealing with Ireland or sex—her two great subjects—her sensibility was streaked with dark foreboding. In one of her finest stories, "A Scandalous Woman" (1974), the obsessions with Ireland and sex converged in a powerful revelation of the price a sensual young woman named Eily is made to pay for a double transgression: she defies her rigidly pious Catholic parents to snatch furtive hours with her lover, and she chooses as the object of her desire the worst possible man: Protestant, fickle, unloving. Caught in the predictable trap of pregnancy, Eily marries the scoundrel and does penance for her sins by going mad. After the psychiatrists have "cured" her, she becomes a shell devoid of beauty and lust, and no spark remains of her enchanting girlish self.

In another of the Irish stories, "The Doll," a woman who has long lived in self-imposed exile returns to her childhood village for an aunt's funeral, and finds that nothing has changed in a world "rife with cruelty and stupidity, a world that had forgotten how to give." The revulsion that Edna O'Brien has sometimes felt toward her native land was plainly in command when she chose as the epigraph for her memoir *Mother Ireland* (1976) the words of her compatriot Samuel Beckett: "I forgive nobody. I wish them all an atrocious life in the fires of icy hell and in the execrable generations to come."

Yet the raging ferocity of hate in this curse from *Malone Dies* is not the only way that O'Brien confronts her Irish legacy. The mood of the stories about her mother is sharply observant rather than severe; the mother who dominates the stories drawn from O'Brien's provincial childhood, which do not indulge in the wistfulness of nostalgia, is one of her most complex and moving creations. A woman who "never read anything, only the price of eggs in the daily paper and the big, stained Mrs. Beeton cookery book," the mother in "The Bachelor" has long since "accepted that she had been born to do the work" while her violent and handsome ne'er-do-well of a husband sells off his inherited farm field by field to pay for his drunken binges. Still beautiful though worn out, she can be tender and charming, but acrid resignation has spread over her soul like scar tissue. Her unhappiness inflicts a burden of guilt on her daughter that does not lighten even in maturity. In the unnerving story "A Rose in the Heart of New York," a middle-aged woman, long estranged from her mother, makes a generous gesture of reconciliation, but the old woman refuses to be consoled. Her bitterness is impenetrable and absolute, and her daughter sadly recognizes, yet again, how right she was to flee when she did.

IN O'BRIEN'S stories about sexual obsession, the child once impaled by guilt has been left far behind if not forgotten. The country girl has come a long distance, in every sense, from the remote farms of western Ireland. Beautiful, intelligent, successful in her work, she has pulled the thistles out of her hair and is now part of a sophisticated and powerful London world. But emotionally she is not much better off than Kate and Baba: she keeps falling into bed and thinking herself in love with married men who inevitably desert a mistress for a wife. In many of the stories collected in *The Fanatic Heart* (1984), O'Brien describes sexual passion with unprurient bluntness that is yet delicate and celebratory. But it is always followed by the unassuageable pain of longing and loss, when the man decides it's time to end the affair. As the lover puts it in "The Love Object," "I adore you, but I'm not in love with you; with my commitments I don't think I could be in love with anyone, it all started gay and lighthearted. . . ." Having plunged this knife into her heart, he pulls on his trousers and takes off.

O'Brien gives no quarter to hope. The forsaken women sob, "We are to be pitied," but time and again life doles out nothing but plundered dreams. O'Brien has been rebuked by feminists for her "narrow" concentration on sex and the unredemptive pain suffered by women when men drop them like hot potatoes. But the impeachment is unfair: she is not concerned with ideology but with the way her Irish Catholic upbringing influenced her feelings about sex, as a

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woman and as a writer. As she remarked in a recent interview: "I think love replaced religion for me in my sense of fervor.... By taking on the mantle of religion, sex assumed proportions that are rather farfetched. It became the central thing in my life. The xual excitement was to a great extent linked with pain and separation."

THAT LAST perception has been at the core of O'Brien's fiction about men and women. But in *Night* she took a fresh look at this disenchanting truth and realized its dramatic possibilities with uncommon verve and insight. In a risky balancing act, she sustained the conflicting demands of hysterical panic and sardonic laughter in the night-long soliloquy of Mary Hanrahan, a woman on the downside of 40 who's had her fill of promiscuous ardor. What O'Brien risked, of course, was the inevitable comparison with a more famous fictional woman counting lovers like sheep through the night, but her narrator has little in common with Molly Bloom.

Mary's sleepless solitary maundering is a rough-tongued litany of terror, gallows humor (directed mainly against herself), and her irrepressible memories of more lovers than she can count. On her beam end, this disheveled voluptuary picks over the shards of a dissipate, disjointed existence: the smells and sounds of an Irish farm, her mother's long and terrible dying of cancer, her discarded husband and hippie son, and the clamorous horde of absurd, enthralling, dangerous lovers. "There are so many waysides," she muses, "that one mistakes them sometimes for the real route. I have had unions, tête-à-têtes, ripping times, gay collisions. All sickeningly predictable like do re me fa."

What makes *Night* so much more affecting than the monotonously mournful sexual landscape of O'Brien's short stories is the scalding, exuberantly vulgar immediacy of this bawdy woman. Letting it all spill out, she is as endearing and funny as she is lonely and frightened. Determined to change her ways, though she knows she won't, Mary cries out: "I want to be by myself at last and to be robbed of that stupid, suppurating malady they call hope." Her despair at first reminds us of Jean Rhys's lost souls, friendless and adrift, but the two writers are very different. Rhys saw with ruthless clarity where her women went wrong, how they had cut themselves off irreparably from the living world with their delusions of ostensible freedom, and she regarded them with flawless detachment.

With the exception of *Night*, O'Brien's portrayals of women devastated by a lover's betrayal are too self-involved and plaintive. We become impatient with their obsessive licking of wounds that are clearly not going to prove fatal. Jean Rhys was never plaintive, though her work and her very existence were sunk in oblivion through most of her life. When her women tumble into the abyss after their protectors cut them off, they are left with nothing, emotionally and materially. O'Brien's women, no matter how miserable, can usually manage to pack a bag, get on a plane, spend time in a sunny and expensive place, and wait out the longing and the loss.

WAITING-OUT IS precisely the grand design of Anna, the narrator of *The High Road*, which is O'Brien's first novel in 11 years. We don't learn much about Anna, who is full of lachrymose memories of a lacerating affair with, needless to say, a married man who will never leave his wife. Her own marriage ended long ago, and she has two grown sons (as does the novelist). Anna has recently been lecturing about Ireland in the United States, and a few pages are given over to rather hackneyed impressions of the American scene.

As the book opens, Anna, thinking of herself as "a mendicant from love," has flown from London to a gorgeous Mediterranean island in the hope of finding "some kind of redemption." In search of a place to stay, she encounters a flamboyant and penniless Irish painter (whom O'Brien fails to render as anything but a ranting bore); a Swede who literally thinks he is the reincarnation of van Gogh; some eccentric women who have found refuge on the island from their rackety past lives; and the beautiful peasant Catalina, a maid at the hotel where Anna settles in. As the lovelorn days unwind, Anna becomes infatuated with the wild and impetuous Catalina (there have been other lesbian interludes in O'Brien's stories), and eventually they spend a night of "other, womanly, primordial" rapture on a mountaintop, "not what we sought from men." When they descend, all hell breaks loose in Catalina's family, which feels itself disgraced beyond salvation.

It's hard to take any of this seriously, mainly because none of the characters, including the melancholy Anna, comes into focus as a credible human being. There are too many gaps that need explaining and don't get it: for one, how does a simple Spanish peasant girl happen to speak excellent English? For another, we're not told what work Anna does, so we can't figure out why she was invited to give those lectures. There is an air of aimless indifference about the novel as one random episode follows another with no sense of consequence, no hint of a context in which a character can be placed and understood. The story ends with lurid melodrama when Catalina's estranged husband turns up—the first we've heard of him—and slits her throat. (When a writer contrives a spurious ending, it's a sure sign of floundering.) Anna can now add a packet of guilt to her holiday souvenirs and move on, still moping inconsolably about the man who got away.

Edna O'Brien has produced a considerable body of writing in a career that by now spans almost 30 years, and to some extent the best of it is still the work rooted in her Irish childhood, nourished by an unflagging memory. The trouble with her stories and novels about the sexual hunger of modern women is their sameness, the feeling we get that there's really nothing more to say about this kind of pain and separation and loss. *The High Road* doesn't offer development or variety about this familiar character and her experience. The paradox may be that while sex involves some of our most tense and turbulent emotions—"the expense of spirit in a waste of shame"—sex without love is mechanical coupling, over and over. What O'Brien has not yet fully explored is love, a more complicated state of mind and heart. Let her count the ways.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Feather Dusters

EX-PRESIDENTS ARE the closest thing America has to royalty. Like European monarchs, they have no real power, but are showered with wealth, bodyguards, and a measured respect for their views on world affairs. Now it's time to crown Ronald Reagan. His friends have bought him a house in Bel Air—next door to the "Beverly Hillbillies" mansion—for the mystifyingly low price of $2.5 million (about half of what it's really worth) and leased it to him, with an option to buy. The taxpayers have given him a Secret Service detail that will be the envy of the neighborhood. And Reagan has promised to rejoin the "mashed-potato circuit," where he will quickly evolve into an American-male version of the Queen Mum. (Now that he lives near Hollywood, will he regale audiences with old Washington stories?) Usually it's hard to get used to the idea of any president as a retiree, but I find myself wondering how different Reagan's life will really become. Certainly the pace won't change much. On a typical workday, Reagan would arrive at the Oval Office at 9 in the morning, receive his National Security Council briefing between 9:30 and 10, then spend the hour from 10 to 11 on "personal" correspondence. Breaking at noon for lunch, Reagan worked till five and was in his pajamas by six. During the Iran-*contra* affair, when he was recovering from prostate surgery and feeling depressed about his decline in popularity, he didn't even bother returning to the office after lunch. Not exactly a back-breaking schedule. If anything, the mashed-potato circuit may seem like hard work.

I FEEL A little sad about seeing Reagan leave. I never met the former president, and never voted for him, but we had a bond. We are both from California, and we both settled in Washington in January 1981. On arriving, we were both largely ignorant of domestic and world affairs, and had to do some cramming. Some concepts, like inflation-adjusted dollars and mutual assured destruction, were harder for Reagan to grasp than they were for me. Others, like how we didn't really trade arms for hostages with Iran, were difficult for me to get my mind around, but came fairly easily to the Gipper. (Maybe we should have started a study group.) As for the appalling materialism of the Reagan era—well, I'm even beginning to feel nostalgic about that. To be sure, I'm alarmed by the widening gulf between rich and poor in our society. But George Bush's "kinder, gentler" rhetoric doesn't include any practical solutions to the problem, such as a stiffer tax on the rich, or an expensive federal jobs program. In fact, Bush's inaugural speech explicitly downplayed the use of public money to end society's problems. Instead, Bush criticized the notion that we are "the sum of our possessions," which struck me as less a call for equality than an upper-class sneer at the tacky nouveau-riche couple that preceded him in the White House. Bush's speech was littered with similar aristocratic insinuations. In the spirit of noblesse oblige, the new president declared this "the age of the offered hand." He praised "subtlety," in contrast to "candor." He described the coming years as a "small and stately story of unity, diversity, and generosity"—as opposed to a big, vulgar one? The overall message was not that Americans should stop caring so much about money, but that they should stop being so gosh-darned showy about it.

INAUGURAL WEEK SEEMED to bring Bush out of the preppy closet. This was especially evident at a $1,500-a-plate inaugural dinner at Union Station, which was packed with Reagan-era Republicans—men in tuxedos (as opposed to "dinner jackets") and women who favored what one bartender described as the "Kitty Carlisle feather duster look." (One feather duster, not realizing I was the working press, asked me for a Stolichnaya.) Introduced into this alien environment were the Yale Whiffenpoofs, a men's a cappella choir that, even in New Haven, is considered preppy verging on high camp. To most of the guests, they were a bewildering presence. But not to Bush. When the Whiffs launched into "Bright College Years," he could be seen first tentatively, then with more confidence, mouthing the words to his old alma mater. Can plaid slacks and gin and tonics be far behind?

THE INAUGURAL ITSELF was a lavish affair, costing roughly $30 million in public and private funds—or nearly a million dollars for every word in the presidential oath of office (which is the only part of the hoopla that is constitutionally or legally mandated). Early in the week I spoke with recently retired Senator William Proxmire, a longtime critic of inaugural excess. Last year Proxmire pushed through Congress a new law prohibiting the use of public money for inaugural events not open to the public, and requiring that military personnel who assume assorted menial roles at inaugural events, such as that of chauffeur or escort, be volunteers. (After the 1985 inaugural, one conscripted Army captain called Proxmire's office to complain that he'd been sent out to buy Tampax, a task he believed beneath the dignity of his rank.) We won't know whether the new prohibitions were enforced until after the inevitable General Accounting Office audit. But if the taxpayers pay for less of the inaugural festivities, won't that lead to greater reliance on corporate and personal gifts and loans, which smack of influence-buying? These combine the sleaziest aspects of political giving: like "soft money" contributions to a political party, they are not made public, and like post-election contributions to a candidate, they are risk-free. Pressed on this point, Proxmire said he'd be willing to see the whole inauguration reduced to the swearing-in, the speech, and the parade. I'll go along with that. But ironically, these are the events that have the least cachet, precisely because almost anybody can get into them. The ticket the feather-dusters were hottest for during inauguration week was to the inaugural gala. Why would anyone want to fight their way into the Washington Convention Center to see a bland variety show that, in any event, was broadcast that night on network television? Precisely because it was the only inaugural event that required all participants to pile into a single building. That meant some people wouldn't be able to get in. In the Bush era, we will learn to dwell less on what we have, and to derive more satisfaction from what others must go without.

TIMOTHY NOAH

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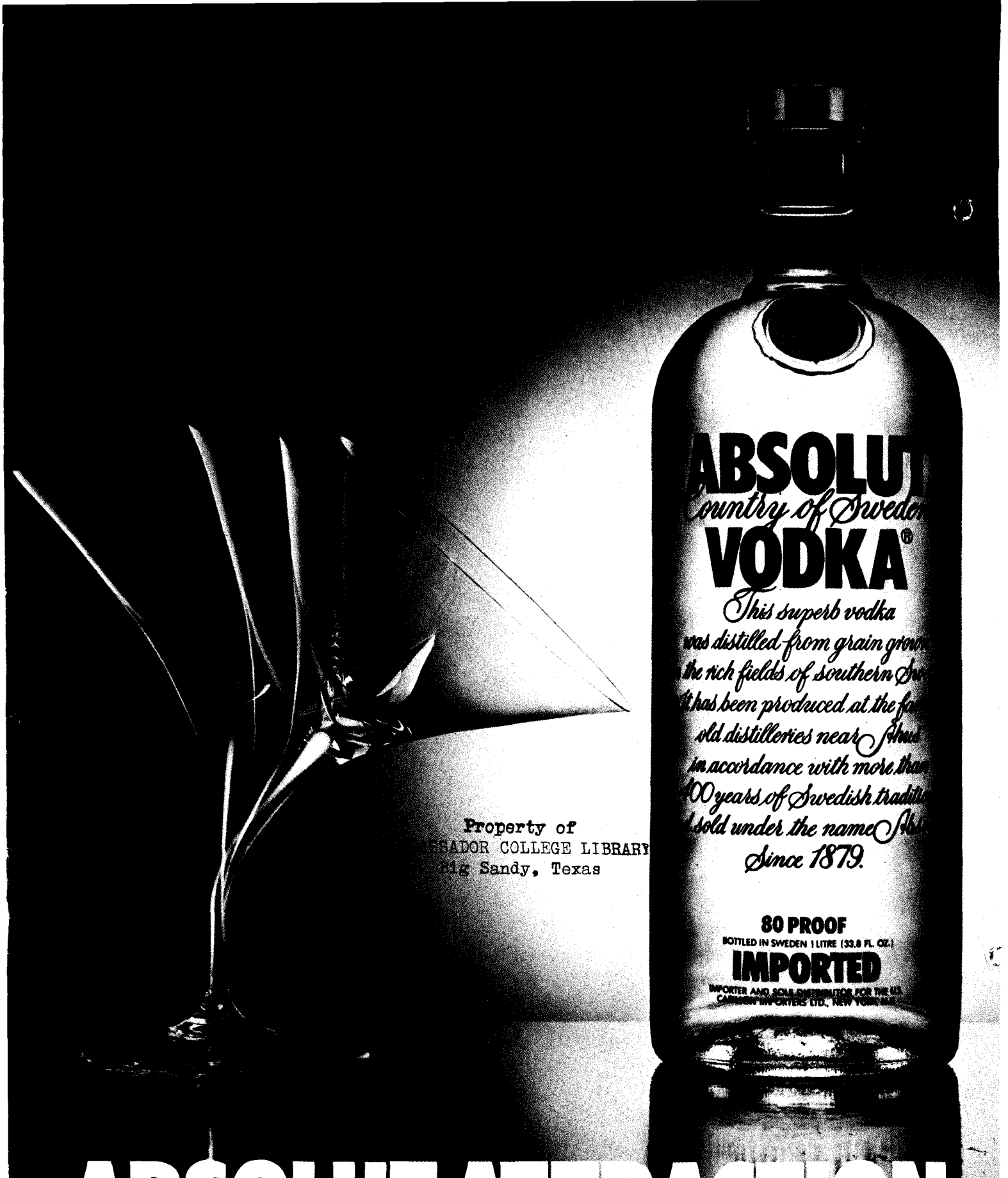
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